DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 178 JC 950 169

AUTHOR	Tinto, Vincent; Love, Anne Goodsell
TITLE	A Longitudinal Study of Learning Communities at LaGuardia Community College.
INSTITUTION	National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, University Park, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Feb 95
CONTRACT	R117G10037
NOTE	213p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Persistence; *Community Colleges; Comparative Analysis; *Cooperative Learning; *Educational Experience; Grade Point Average; Group Activities; *Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; *Student Attitudes; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS	*City University of New York La Guardia Comm Coll; *Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

The learning communities at New York's LaGuardia Community College consist of groups of students taking two or more classes together and providing each other with social and academic support, while professors integrate class content to broaden understanding. A study undertaken to compare the experience of students in the college's LC programs to students in traditional classes tracked the learning and persistence behaviors of beginning college students over the course of their first academic year. In addition, a qualitative case study was undertaken to determine if collaborative learning strategies represented an effective way to respond to academic needs. Study findings included the following: (1) compared to traditional students, LC students' perceptions of classes, other students, faculty, counselors, campus climate, and their own involvement were generally more positive; (2) LC students earned more credits and had higher grade point averages than traditional students; (3) although LC students had only a slightly higher persistence rate than the comparison students (77.7% versus 75.9%), they were significantly more likely to express an intention to continue in higher education (88.5% versus 77.9%); (4) in general, LC students indicated that group work and peer collaboration was easier and more fun than traditional methods, valued diversity in their communities, and saw broad themes and connections across classes; and (5) they did not, however, tend to reflect on why the positive LC experience was not achieved outside the community. The questionnaires and data tables are appended. (Contains 12 references.) (KP)

Yr5, Qtr 1
Faculty & Instruction
Deliverable

ED 380 178

National Center for Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

A Longitudinal Study of Learning Communities

At LaGuardia Community College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Vincent Tinto and Anne Goodsell Love

Syracuse University

February 1995

This report was published by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (NCTLA). The work herein was supported under the Educational Research and Development Center Program of The Pennsylvania State University (Grant No. R117G10037) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed in this report do not reflect the positions of policies of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education, or The Pennsylvania State University. The National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment is a research, development, and dissemination center devoted to studying teaching and learning, the improvement of educational practice, and the advancement of theory and practice in the assessment of student and institutional performance. The only federally-funded national research and development center devoted specifically to postsecondary education, NCTLA is a consortium housed at The Pennsylvania State University and includes University of Illinois at Chicago, Syracuse University, Northwestern University, and the University of Southern California.

JC 950 169

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ii

Part One: The Mission and Character of the Project . . 1

Overview of the NCTLA Center 1

NCTLA Project on Collaborative Learning . . . 2

Part Two: Research Methodology 5

Research Rationale 5

Longitudinal Panel Study Methodology 6

Qualitative Case Study Methodology 11

Part Three: Learning Communities at LaGuardia Community College 12

The Setting and the Program 12

Part Four: Quantitative Findings: Longitudinal Study of Student Behavior 19

Descriptive Statistics 19

Multivariate Statistics 50

Summary of Quantitative Findings 52

Part Five: Qualitative Findings: Constructing Safe Havens for Learning 54

Methodology 55

Findings 62

Summary of Qualitative Findings 90

Part Six: Summary of Findings 93

References 97

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaires 99

Appendix B: Descriptive Data 123

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LaGuardia Community College has a long history of innovation. Its learning community programs are but one of a number of innovative efforts to enhance student learning at the College. Learning communities have been at existence at the College for a number of years. A wide range, if not the large majority, of faculty have participated in them and have been trained in a variety of collaborative and cooperative teaching techniques. When one compares the experience of students in the learning communities with those of students in comparison classes, one is in fact comparing students who participate in a variety of innovative classes, learning community and comparison. The primary distinction between the two groups is not so much one of innovative teaching to traditional teaching, but one of a shared curricular experience to that of largely independent course experience. As a result, the sense one has of the "impact" of learning communities upon student experience - resulting from a comparison of different groups of students, tends to underestimate the impact one might observe in more traditional collegiate settings or in settings where the faculty are not so widely trained in collaborative and cooperative teaching techniques. In this regard it is revealing that rates of persistence at LaGuardia Community College is considerably higher than other community colleges in the City of New York and of community colleges generally regardless of location.

Quantitative Panel Study: Tracing the Impacts of Participation in Learning Communities

Students in learning communities, as a group, reported very similar activity levels activities, in and outside class, as did students in the comparison classes. As a group, their frequency and patterns of interaction with the faculty, other students, and in a variety of learning domains were very similar. The one exception were students in the New Student House program. On the areas of faculty interaction, writing, participation in clubs, and in the arts, they reported significantly more activity than all other groups, learning community and comparison.

Similarities in activities were not reflected in patterns of perceptions. Student in learning communities of all types were significantly more positive in their perceptions of their classes, other students, faculty, counselors, the campus climate, and their own involvement than were students in the comparison classes. Again, this was most noticeably among students in the New Student House program. They were more positive in their views of all aspects of the college.

Differences in perceptions were translated into small but noticeable differences both in earned credit and accumulative grade point average during the academic year. In all cases, save for the Liberal Arts Cluster students, students in learning communities outperformed students in the comparison classes. And this was the case despite their having lower grade point averages in high school.

Though measures of persistence within the College showed only a slight gain for learning community students (77.7 to 75.9 percent), data on intended transfer and continuation indicated that learning community students were significantly more likely to continue in higher education than were comparison class students (88.5 vs. 77.9).

In this regard, it should be noted that such behaviors are one of the intended goals of the programs. Faculty hope to encourage students to reach higher. Indeed, in the qualitative portion of the study, we noted that a number of learning community students spoke of having "raised their sights" during their participation in the programs.

Qualitative Case Study: Learning Communities and the Construction of Safe Havens

The results of a qualitative case study revealed considerable detail about the context of the study and about the study itself. Accordingly, the results of a qualitative study of student learning experiences include details about the time spent in and out of class, and descriptions of the environment in which the study took place. These can be described in the following four categories:

1) Cultural diversity
2) Students formed groups
3) Social and academic support
4) Consistent structure

Cultural Diversity

Students at LaGuardia differed according to age, ethnicity, gender, employment status, family status, sexual orientation, language spoken at home, how many languages students spoke, class status, religious beliefs, where students lived (commuting distance), family education levels, and career aspirations or degree aspirations. Faculty diversity was also evident, although not to quite the same extent. All faculty members were able to draw on their own backgrounds and therefore broaden the context of courses for students. This may have served to make students feel more accepted and welcome in the classroom.

Three findings stand out regarding cultural diversity at LaGuardia. The first is the appreciation that students had that LaGuardia is a place where many different types of people gather. The second point is that faculty at LaGuardia teach classes that contain incredible ranges of diversity. Even in a class of 20-25 students, students were working full-time, had children, were supporting their parents, were just learning English, were proficient in English, etc. Faculty members adapted their techniques to deal with this on a daily basis. The third point to remember is that after a while, it seemed as if this range of diversity was the norm. And for LaGuardia, it is. But if we step back and look at it in the context of higher education on a statewide or national level, the kinds of interactions that happen at LaGuardia are unique.

Forming Groups

Students in learning communities formed groups in a number of ways. We are referring to formal and informal groups, both those that professors constructed in the classroom and those that students constructed in the classroom, as well as the variety of ways that students formed connections with one another out-of-class. Students were placed into groups by the very formation of learning communities; the fact that groups of 20-30 students were placed together in 3 or 4 classes meant that they spent a lot of time with each other. Students liked the small size of the classes and the fact that they were linked together. One students said, "It's easier in a cluster. If they have it separate, most people would just stop coming to class, because it will be hard for them if they have so many students in one class and you can't really learn anything."

In many classes, students were placed into small groups, either for the duration of the semester or for a project. One group of students tried to get to class early so that they could

sit together. Other students commented about how everyone got a chance to participate in discussions when they were in small groups.

Students also maintained groups outside of class, spending time together informally before and after classes (at the cafeteria, studying, walking together to the next class), and taking advantage of more formal opportunities created within LaGuardia to form groups (student organizations). The amount of time that students spent in peer groups emphasizes the importance that they place on peers and social support, especially when considered in light of the many competing obligations students had for their time.

Although in-class groups may seem more directly related to the aim of learning communities, out-of-class groups served to solidify social ties that were begun in the classroom. Furthermore, the times spent together out of class were only possible because of the way in which learning communities were constructed--that students went to the same classes and had the same schedules. They had the same breaks, the same cancelled classes, the same pattern of tests and papers.

Social and Academic Support

Students found social and academic support in their learning communities. They talked of comfort, friendships, pride in being at LaGuardia, and the things they were doing in classes. These shared feelings contributed to student satisfaction, involvement in classes, and students' belief that they would succeed.

Learning communities provided continuity between classes that allowed students to feel comfortable in class, and in turn, sustain topics of conversation across classes. Many students talked about the help they were able to give to or get from their peers. One woman described studying for a test with another student. She spoke Spanish and a little bit of English; he spoke English and a little bit of Spanish, and the time they spent together talking in languages that they both were familiar with helped her grades and her level of confidence.

Faculty members also provided support in a variety of ways. In some learning communities, the ways that professors ran their classes complimented each other (one lectured, one used groups), allowing for accommodation of different learning styles. In other learning communities, faculty and staff met on a regular basis to coordinate their efforts and share notes on the progress of various students, as in the case of New Student House. Other

learning communities, by focusing on cross-cultural topics, were able to reinforce the variety of experiences the students brought with them to class, especially the liberal arts clusters that were organized around themes like gender roles or ethnicity. These topics were ones that students had concrete experience with.

High levels of social and academic support in learning communities contributed to student satisfaction. Students became much more aware of the support they had created and received in a learning community after they were out of it and taking discrete courses. They were involved in their classes, playing an active role in group discussions and in-class writing assignments. This is one area of the findings in which the qualitative data and quantitative data converged, giving a clear picture of the differences between student involvement in and out of learning communities.

Another area of convergence between the two types of data collected reflected the high levels of social and academic support that students felt. For students in learning communities, this translated into their confidence that they could succeed, whether that meant graduating from LaGuardia, transferring to another college, or getting a good job. Students talked optimistically about their opportunities after LaGuardia; this was borne out in the higher rates of continuation found by the survey.

Consistent Structure

The consistent structure of the learning communities facilitated students' academic and social support. The scheduling of courses in contiguous blocks of time, the consistency of expectations and of organizing frameworks across courses, and the continuity of topics served to enhance students academic and social experiences.

Courses were scheduled with students in mind. Learning communities consisted of courses that were requirements for students' majors or degrees, and were scheduled for contiguous blocks of time, showing a sensitivity to students' work schedules. Secondly, students were given consistent expectations and organizing frameworks across courses. Professors communicated regularly, they knew of each other's expectations, and therefore were able to give consistent messages to students. Finally, students liked the continuity of content across courses in learning communities, and they thought it helped them to learn the material better. They could always ask questions of each other, even if they were not in the "right" class.

PART ONE

THE MISSION AND CHARACTER OF THE PROJECT

OVERVIEW OF THE NCTLA CENTER

The work of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (NCTLA) centers on four questions. These are:

> What is the character of student learning and persistence in American higher education and how is it currently being shaped by student experience in institutions of higher education?
>
> How can student learning and persistence be improved?
>
> How can faculty teaching be improved?
>
> How can innovations in higher education be sustained and integrated into the mainstream of institutional life?

The first question, that concerning the character of student learning and persistence, seeks to describe and understand how student learning and persistence is currently being shaped by institutions of higher education across the country. To answer that question, NCTLA has initiated a longitudinal study of the experiences and learning outcomes of a nationally representative panel of students carefully selected to capture the diversity of both students and institutions of higher education. The selected panel of students is being followed over a two-year period to ascertain to what degree and in what manner their experiences in higher education shape their learning and persistence over that period.

The next two questions, those concerning the improvement of teaching, learning, and persistence involve a series of research projects which examine exemplary practices in the areas of student classroom experience, faculty teaching, curriculum, and student out-of-class experience. These projects seek to describe and explain the success of exemplary practices with an eye toward sharing that information with other institutions who also seek to improve student learning and persistence in the future. The present study is one of these projects.

The last question, that of sustaining change efforts, consists of a series of case studies of institutions that have, in varying degrees, been successful in sustaining change efforts over time. The focus of these studies to uncover those forms of institutional practice that explain why it is that some institutions have been able to sustain change over the long-term, while others have not.

THE NCTLA PROJECT ON COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Institutions and Programs

The project on collaborative learning is one of the several projects that focuses on the improvement of teaching, learning, and persistence in higher education. In this instance, the project studies the efforts of three institutions, Seattle Central Community College, The University of Washington, Seattle, and LaGuardia Community College in New York City, to employ collaborative learning strategies to alter the ways in which beginning college students experience the first year of college. Specifically, the project looks at the Coordinated Studies Program at Seattle Central Community College, the Freshman Interest Group Program at The University of Washington, Seattle and the Learning Communities at LaGuardia Community College. In each case, the project concerns itself with understanding how those programs influence student learning and persistence so as to inform other institutions across the nation which also seek to enhance student learning and persistence.

In the broadest dimensions, the use of the term collaborative learning refers to a range of classroom and curricular practices that actively engage students in the learning process. These practices range from the clustering of students into working groups within the classroom, to the linking of course content between classrooms, to bringing students and faculty together in ways which combine several classes into one larger class. However structured, collaborative learning strategies share several common threads, not the least of which is that students are expected to work together and become active participants in the

classroom. In this way, all collaborative learning strategies emphasize the development of student learning communities and their importance to the learning process.

The choice of institutions and collaborative learning programs was dictated by four criteria. First the program had to have been in place for a number of years and been a significant, institutionalized part of institutional life. It had to be well-supported and reach a significant section of the entering student body. Second, it had to occur in an institutional setting that could be said to be like that of many other settings and serve a diverse, not specialized, student body. It could not be found either in a unique setting or reach only a very narrow slice of the student body (e.g. only honors students). Third, the selected programs had to serve a wide range of beginning students, not just those who were able to persist to gain entry to a program. Fourth, the selected programs had to span the range of collaborative learning efforts currently in place across the nation. They could not be all of the same type.

In applying these criteria to site and program selection, we wanted to avoid studying marginal or very new programs whose future was in doubt or whose reach was limited to a very narrow range of students or to very specialized types of institutions. Given our underlying concern with policy and educational change, we wanted our study to appeal to a broad national audience who, in response to the study, could say "if it could happen there, it could happen anywhere." And we wanted to focus on programs that involved students in their first year of college. It is in that year, more than any other, that investments in programs have the greatest impact on learning and persistence within the institution. At the same time, we wanted our choices of sites and programs to span, as best we could, the range of collaborative learning programs and the ways they have been applied to the task of educating students across the nation. By doing so, we wanted to understand, within the limits of our resources, how different types of collaborative learning programs shape student learning and persistence in higher education.

Methodology

To describe and understand these programs, the project utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In the former case, we employed longitudinal survey methods to study the experiences of beginning college students in both typical and collaborative learning classrooms. In the latter case, we used participant observation and interviewing methods to understand how program participants made sense of their experience in those programs, especially as it related to learning.

Though separate, the methods were linked by a common concern, namely to understand not only what students experienced, but also how those experiences were associated over time with their behaviors and changing views of learning and their subsequent persistence in higher education. In this very important manner, the methods were complementary to one another, each yielding information that together provided a richer sense of the impact of program participation than any one method could provide on its own.

The methods were complementary in yet another sense, that of collaborative effort among the research team. The three researchers met on a weekly basis (and during field site visits on a daily basis) to discuss the ongoing research. As a result, developing information from each of the sites and each research strain, qualitative and quantitative, became part of the thinking of the whole group and, in turn, informed the work of each team member.

Though the study did assess the character of student experience, the study was not an assessment of the programs themselves. That is to say, the study was not intended to determine to what degree the programs were achieving their intended goals and in what manner they could be more effective in doing so. While comparative information was obtained on the experiences, behaviors, and persistence outcomes of a comparison group of students, that information was used to understand programs, not judge them.

PART TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH RATIONALE

To understand the impact of collaborative learning programs on student learning and persistence, a research design was constructed that was both longitudinal and multi-method in nature.

The longitudinal character of the research design reflected two different needs. First it reflected our need to ascertain how participation in a collaborative learning program in the first quarter of college influenced, over time, the learning behaviors and subsequent learning and persistence of program students. Second, it mirrored our desire to understand, as best we could, the full extent of students' first year experience and the nature of the program in which they were enrolled. For these reasons we visited each site five times over the course of our work and collected data at several different times during the academic year, at the outset of the program, at two other times during the academic year, and, for the quantitative component of the study, at the start of the second year of college. We returned one last time in the Spring quarter of the following academic year to share a draft of the report with the faculty and staff of the institution and program. This enabled us to obtain their feedback about our work and validate as well as call into question our data.

Its multi-method character, specifically its use of both quantitative survey and qualitative analyses, arose out of the need to not only describe and track the behaviors and outcomes of large numbers of program and non-program students, but also understand in detail the complex ways in which program participation shaped student views of learning. While longitudinal survey analyses could respond to the former need, it is not well suited as a response to the latter need. For that purpose, we employed qualitative methods, specifically participant observation and interviewing and we did so over the course of the first academic year. As will become apparent during the following pages, both methods provided important insight into "program effects" that no one method could provide on its own.

It should also be noted that our reliance on multiple research methods reflects our belief as researchers that the complementary use of multiple methods, specifically quantitative and qualitative, yields insight into program impact that is greater than the sum of the data yielded by the separate parts.

LONGITUDINAL PANEL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The project employed longitudinal survey methods to study the experiences of beginning college students in both typical and collaborative learning classrooms and track their learning and persistence behaviors over the course of the academic year.

Sampling

In all institutions, we sampled first year students by first selecting learning community programs, then classes that comprised those programs, and then sampling all students in those classes. We did so not only because classrooms served as logical units of analysis, but also because that procedure greatly simplified the task of reaching students. To reach them individually in class or by mail out-of-class was too intrusive and, in the case of the community college, not possible without great expense.

In this instance, for LaGuardia Community College, we selected three learning community (LC) programs, the Liberal Arts Cluster, the Enterprise Center, and the New Student House and a range of comparison classes that, in the view of the program staff, best captured a representative sampling of first year students not enrolled in the LCs. Among the learning community programs, we selected all four classes in which students in those programs were registered. A total of twelve LC and sixteen comparison classes were selected. These are listed below in Table 3-1. We sampled all students in those classes, obtaining as we did so, information that would enable us to confirm their first year status. Only those students who were considered to be in their first year at the College were included in the panel.

For the purposes of this study, we took first year college students as representing those persons who enrolled in the specific institution in question for the first time, regardless of prior enrollment. Nevertheless, because students with no prior experience may be different in some fundamental way from students who have prior higher educational experience, we obtained data that would allow us to distinguish between these two groups of "beginning college students."

TABLE 2-1

SELECTED CLASSES FOR A STUDY OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAM CLASSES

Liberal Arts Cluster

ENG 101.71	English: Composition 1
ENG 101.72	English: Composition 1
ENG 101.73	English: Composition 1
SSS 100.74	Introduction to Sociology
SSN 192.77	Practical Politics in NYC

Enterprise Center

MAT 096.35	Basic Math
AMM 101.37	Introduction to Business
MAT 096.38	Basic Math
ESL 099.39	English as a Second Language

New Student House

HUC 099.65	Basic Speech Communication
ENA 099.67	Basic Writing
CSE 098.67	Basic Reading 2

COMPARISON CLASSES

MAT 096.02	Basic Math
MAT 096.03	Basic Math
CSE 095.03	Basic Reading-1
CSE 095.05	Basic Reading-1
CSE 098.01	Basic Reading-2
CSE 098.09	Basic Reading-2
CSE 098.14	Basic Reading-2
ENG 099.02	Basic Writing-3
ENG 099.03	Basic Writing-3
ENG 101.09	English: Composition-1
ENG 101.03	English: Composition-1
SSS 100.01	Introduction to Sociology
ESL 099.02	English as a Second Language
AMM 101.05	Introduction to Business
HUC 099.01	Basic Speech Communication
HUC 099.11	Basic Speech Communication

Questionnaire Development

Two questionnaires were developed, one as an entry questionnaire administered at the beginning of the first year, the other as a follow-up to that questionnaire administered later during the first year. The survey questionnaires were the end product of a lengthy process of conceptual analysis, item construction, and pilot-testing that involved both students and staff at the each of the participating institutions. The initial draft of the survey questionnaires, for both the beginning and follow-up questionnaire, was the result of a conceptual analysis designed to answer the question of what sorts of information we needed to achieve the goals of the study. In some cases that led us to draw upon items from existing questionnaires (e.g. Pace's Quality of Student Effort Scales) and, in other cases, to develop new items for the surveys. The resulting draft versions were circulated to program faculty and staff for their review. Their comments led us to produce a second draft of the questionnaire that was, in turn, pilot-tested with a number of students at each institution. The outcome of that pilot-testing led to the construction of a final versions of the questionnaires which were then produced separately for the program and comparison group students (See Appendix A for copies of survey questionnaires).

It must be noted that the development of the questionnaires was in part driven by an underlying conceptual framework that informed our research and that of the Center generally, namely the importance of involvement in learning to both student learning and persistence. This framework, first described by Tinto (1987), argues that student involvement in learning, in this instance via collaborative learning programs, leads students to become more involved in their own learning and therefore expend greater quality of effort on behalf of their learning. That "intermediate outcome" leads, in turn, to greater student learning and persistence.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered in the beginning of the Fall 1992 quarter and later at the end of that quarter (see Appendix A for copies of the questionnaires). The first questionnaire collected information on a range of student attributes, prior education, current life situations (e.g. family and work responsibilities), educational intentions, learning preferences, perceptions of ability, and attitudes regarding education. The second questionnaire collected information on current life situations, on a range of classroom and out-of-classroom activities, estimates of learning gains, perceptions of the institution, and expectations regarding subsequent enrollment.

Measures of student engagement in classroom and out-of-classroom behaviors were derived from Pace's Quality of Student Effort Scales. Rather than being adopted wholesale, Pace's items were modified to suit the specific context of the institution and program being studied. While ruling out comparisons with prior research, the modifications allowed us to better capture both the intent and impact of program participation upon student behaviors.

The first questionnaire was administered during the second week of the Fall quarter by the faculty of the selected classes. Only beginning students were included in the survey administration. We obtained a total of 598 usable questionnaires, 267 and 331 from the LC and the comparison classes respectively. The second, follow-up, questionnaire was administered during the last two weeks of the Fall quarter. Again the questionnaires were distributed in class by the respective faculty. Of the initial total of 267 LC and 331 comparison class students who responded to the first questionnaire, we obtained a total 188 and 294 useable questionnaires respectively. The final panel utilized in this study consisted of only those persons who responded to both questionnaires. The resulting panel therefore consisted of 174 program and 287 comparison group students for a total panel sample of 461 students. All analyses were carried out on this panel of students.

In the following Fall, information was obtained from institutional records as to earned credits, grade point average, and quarter to quarter enrollments (Winter, Spring, and Fall of the following academic year). These data, together with students' estimates of learning gains, formed the outcome variable set. Estimates of learning gains, grade point average and subsequent persistence were seen to represent temporarily ordered outcomes that followed from college activities.

Data Analysis

Several forms of quantitative analysis were carried out. First, descriptive statistics were employed to describe and compare the attributes, experiences, and outcomes of students in the program and comparison panels. Second, discriminant and regression analyses were used to ascertain for program students how attributes and experiences were related, over time, to behaviors and, in turn, to outcomes over the course of the year. Since persistence was measured by a simple dichotomous variable, we used logit regression analysis in the study of persistence into the second year. In both cases stepwise procedures were employed with variables added to the analysis according to a conceptual ordering system that places variables in order of their time occurrence. In all instances, the statistical package for the mainframe SAS was employed in the statistical analyses.

QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The Research Question

This study began with the assumption that collaborative learning strategies are an effective way to respond to the academic needs of students. The rationale for such an assumption was outlined by Bogdan and Taylor, who wrote about investigating from a positive position about a particular program's implementation (1990). Their rationale was that the question "does a program work?" did little to help practitioners understand how they could implement a similar program and "function[ed] as an exclusionary gatekeeper rather than as an encouraging teacher" (p. 186). Beginning with the assumption that collaborative learning programs such as Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS), Coordinated Studies Programs (CSPs), and other learning communities work, we could go on to ask questions like: How do these strategies work? What do people do in these types of collaborative learning programs? What do these programs look like? Therefore the intent of this study was to understand, from the students' point of view, how participation in a collaborative learning program influenced students' learning experiences and how those learning experiences fit in with their broader experiences as first-year students.

Program Selection

In keeping with our intent to study noteworthy programs, we selected portions of the programs within each institution that represented the most complex attempt at collaborative learning. Therefore, our choices of classes to observe and students and staff to interview were made in a purposeful manner. To determine which classes and professors had the best chances of involving the students in the courses, we consulted with program administrators and staff, and followed up on their recommendations with our own observations. Once classes were selected, students within them were selected to be interviewed using a purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Our sampling plan also included talking to students who were diverse in many ways--age, gender, race, and attitude about the program.

Data Collection

We visited each site for three one-week periods during the academic year. The first site visit took place during the early part of the Fall quarter. It allowed us to become familiar with the institution. In addition we were able to see how the learning community programs were functioning at an early stage. The second site visit occurred during the late part of the

Fall quarter; the programs were ending and the students were able to tell us about their experiences during the quarter. The third site visit, made during the Spring quarter, enabled students to reflect upon experiences with and without the program.

Data collection consisted of participant observation, interviews, and document review. Participant observation was conducted in and out of classes, and on campus and in the surrounding community, wherever possible. Interviews consisted of informal conversations with students, faculty, and staff; scheduled open-ended interviews with students and staff; informal telephone interviews with key informants; and scheduled interviews with students which followed a semi structured protocol. Document review consisted of gathering school publications, class materials, course syllabi and schedules.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in an on-going process which enabled us to explore themes as they emerged and to pursue unexpected leads during the second and third site visits. Data were analyzed by reading and rereading the fieldnotes and interview transcripts to familiarize ourselves with them, assigning codes to portions of the data, identifying emerging themes in the data, and generating working hypotheses based on these themes. The working hypotheses were checked against the data and modified, as necessary, before being presented as findings. This process of incorporating emerging themes from the data with hypotheses constructed during the study is characteristic of inductive analysis used in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The strength of inductive analysis is that it facilitates the "grounding" of new models or theories ("grounded theory", Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As noted previously, there has been sparing use of qualitative research in higher education, and its use has been encouraged by researchers (Crowson, 1987; Kuh & Andreas, 1991; Kuh, et al., 1986). To make the mechanical aspects of data analysis more manageable (retrieving and sorting the coded data), a mainframe computer package QUALOG was used (Shelly and Sibert, 1987).

PART THREE

LEARNING COMMUNITIES AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

THE SETTING AND THE PROGRAM

LaGuardia Community College is located in Queens, one of the five boroughs of New York City. To outsiders, New York City is crowded, noisy, tense, rushed, violent, and dirty. News stories abound of muggings, shootings, rapes, carjackings, and killings. At the beginning of one of our site visits, the leading news story was a car jacking, followed by a story about a missing woman who had been seen last driving on a highway. During another visit, a prominent news story was about a woman who had been mugged on the subway and the college student who had been stabbed repeatedly while trying to assist her. One the positive side, New York City is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the country, continuing in its long tradition of being a gateway for immigrants. It boasts of museums, street festivals, parks, centers of fashion and finance, magnificent skyscrapers, and food from all over the world.

Queens is itself a large diverse city, home to Shea Stadium (home of the NY Mets baseball team), Flushing Meadows (host of the 1939 and 1964-65 World's Fairs), and Forest Hills (host to the U.S. Open tennis championships). It is also home to LaGuardia Airport, Flushing (containing the fastest growing Chinatown in the country), and many centers of industry. Queens, like most of New York City, is full of neighborhoods--pockets of distinct cultures demarcated by streets, expressways, or railway lines.

The neighborhood around LaGuardia Community College is industrial, filled with factories and warehouses, lined with streets busy with commercial traffic. The nearest residential neighborhoods are several blocks to the West. It is a bustling area, bursting with people, traffic, and noise. The six-lane street to the north of LCC leads to the 59th Street Bridge, which crosses the East River and links Queens and Manhattan. To the south lies the Long Island Expressway which leads to the Queens-Midtown tunnel, also a major commuter route. The elevated railway roars by just north of LCC. Though some people walk to

campus, most commute. And while the college is accessible by both car and train, most use public transportation. Indeed the college was situated where it was precisely to take advantage of the available public transportation facilities, subway, train, and bus. Several bus and subway lines stop within a short distance of the college. By contrast, parking is inconvenient and spaces not abundant -- people driving cars usually try to arrive before 8 a.m. in order to find a parking spot on the streets. And the few parking lots that exist are expensive and of limited size.

Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College, the full, official name of the institution, is a branch of the City University of New York (CUNY). Approximately 9,400 students are enrolled of which nearly seventy-percent are full-time. Students are a variety of ages and ethnicities. As of 1992, slightly more than thirty-one percent were 26 years or older. Nearly thirty-six percent identified themselves as Hispanic, twenty-seven percent as Black (non-Hispanic) and fifteen percent as Asian/Pacific Islander. Academic programs at LaGuardia lead to three degrees: the Associate in Arts (AA), the Associate in Applied Sciences (AAS), and the Associate in Science (AS). LaGuardia also offers three certificate programs, as well as many non-credit continuing education programs. Perhaps the best-known feature of LaGuardia's curriculum is its Cooperative Education Program (the "Coop"), which requires that students engage in three full-time internships during the course of their studies. Some students reported that the positive reputation of the Coop program was the reason they were at LaGuardia; they hoped the experience they earned through the program would give them an advantage when it came time to look for a job.

Four buildings comprise the campus of LaGuardia Community College. Two buildings, the Main building (the "M" building) and the "E" building are adjoining, and take up an entire city block. They are in what used to be factories. The M building is the original location of LCC, which opened in 1970. The five story red brick construction is highlighted by maroon and bright yellow painted accents which are beginning to show their age. The five story E building was newly renovated in 1991, but still had signs inside designating various construction sites. High above its entrance hangs a modern wire sculpture reminiscent of a huge musical harp. The fresh paint inside with bright blue trim, new furniture in the lounges, and a well-stocked, newly furnished library, make this an inviting building. The M and E buildings are joined by window-lined walkways, which offer views of two courtyards filled with grass, flowers, and benches. To look at them it is possible to distance oneself from the drab streets and factories that surround the campus.

The "C" building is two blocks to the west, separated from the M and E buildings by the Design Center of New York, an architectural design center. The C building was another factory that had just been acquired by LaGuardia Community College and renovated; it was first opened for the 1992 Fall semester. Although it is new, it does not have the airy atmosphere of the E building. Instead, the corridors and classrooms seem more like that of a high school. Locating rooms in the C building was confusing, perhaps due to its newness and its lack of adequate directories and signs. One of the researchers was late for one class because she could not find the room; after walking around the block of corridors twice she spotted it in a dead-end hallway. In our rounds of the C building we saw one lecture hall, which we estimated could hold 150 people. Other than that, we saw no lecture halls in any other buildings; most classrooms in the C building probably seated up to 50 students, and had moveable furniture.

Finally, the "L" building is across the street to the east of the M and E buildings. It is only two stories tall, and wedged between a five story warehouse and a diner. It is an older building that houses the offices, classrooms, and laboratories of the college's Computer Information Systems Department and the Middle College, an alternative high school. Each building has classrooms, faculty offices, and a cafeteria; all but the L building has lounge space.

If the visual contrast between the outside and inside of LaGuardia Community College is refreshing, the aural contrast is even more so. That is not to say that it is quiet inside LCC. Indeed, there is constant noise in the hallways, in many classrooms, in the lounges and cafeterias. Even the library is like a beehive, humming with activity. The contrast rests not so much in the volume of noise as in the timbre--the noise comes from many conversations and laughter all simultaneously occurring; it does not come from the more threatening sounds outside--horns honking, engines running, and trains roaring. With all the activity inside LCC it is difficult to find quiet places. Students sometimes go into vacant classrooms if the doors are not locked, and one woman was seen in the fourth floor bathroom doing her homework because it was a quiet place. On the whole, however, LaGuardia Community College can be thought of as an island in the swirling tides of New York City, a stopping off place in the ebb and flow of the students' busy lives. It is a place that allows its students to set themselves apart from the demands of city life, if only temporarily, and focus on learning, growing, and expanding their horizons.

An additional contrast between LaGuardia Community College and its surrounding environment is that LaGuardia feels secure, clean, and friendly. In terms of safety, security guards stand at every doorway, checking for LCC ID tags. Although posted signs say that each student, faculty member, and staff member are required to wear an ID that is visible at all times, not all of them do, and not everyone is stopped by the security guards. We walked in and out of buildings for three days before anyone asked for identification. Therefore, the presence of security guards seemed to be more symbolic than it was rigorous. Perhaps the wearing of ID badges served as much to identify members of the community to each other as it did to restrict access to non-members.

The students, staff, and faculty of LaGuardia projected a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Although the large size of LaGuardia was intimidating at first for some students, as the semester progressed many commented on the friendliness of the people around them. They also commented about the diversity of students, noting that other community colleges in the CUNY system were not so diverse. "If you go to [Queensborough or Manhattan Community College] it's just the black students hanging out over here in this part of the cafeteria, just the white students talking to each other over there. Where here, we're all mixed up together more and it's very friendly, and you get to know a lot of different people."

Learning communities

Learning communities take on a variety of forms at LCC, but the underlying principle remains constant: groups of students, taking two or more classes together, will provide both social and academic support for each another and in doing so, enhance the classroom experience for all. Professors who teach the linked courses of the learning community are expected to integrate the course content, materials, and, if possible, assignments so that a broader understanding of each course is possible. Administrators at LCC, specifically the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Director of Developmental and Special Programs, speak with a vision of learning communities that is consistent across student populations. Whether students are in developmental, vocational, or liberal arts programs, learning communities are available to them. At LaGuardia, learning communities are not just for honors students, but for all.

Although a formal description of learning communities does not appear in the college catalog, the extent to which they have been institutionalized becomes evident upon talking with faculty members.[1] Many faculty members have taught in learning communities consistently over the years; indeed it is fair to say that most faculty have at one time or another been involved in the program. Some remain in the same faculty team, while others form new themes and new alliances with faculty members who have not been involved previously. For example, one English professor was familiar with learning communities because many of her colleagues were involved in teaching in them, but she did not become involved until her interest was piqued by a theme that someone suggested, and until some administrative duties she had been responsible for were completed. Administrative support of faculty who teach in learning communities is evident in faculty development seminars held for faculty who are planning learning communities, and in the release time granted to faculty for planning new learning communities. Much of the administrative support for scheduling courses and recruiting students comes from the office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. But each of the programs, the Liberal Arts Cluster, the Enterprise program, and the New Student House have some faculty and staff allocated for their planning and development needs.

The term learning community is used at LCC to refer to a number of programs: liberal arts clusters, Enterprise program, New Student House, and the Cope program, to name a few. Each has a specific target population, and in most cases each meets certain requirements for completion of an academic program. The various learning communities are described below.

Liberal arts clusters

Liberal arts clusters ("clusters") are groupings of three or four courses where professors integrate the content across courses according to a unifying theme. The same students register for each cluster, creating a cohort of 25-35 students. Examples of clusters offered during the 1992-93 academic year were: "Work and Technology"--Introduction to Sociology, Computers and Society, Composition, and The Research Paper; "Freedom and Seeing"--Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Art, Composition, and The Research Paper; and "Women Talk/Men Talk"--Composition, The Research Paper, Oral Communication, and Introduction to Philosophy. In addition to taking these courses, students

[1] A catalog description of learning communities was added to the 1993-1994 and subsequent catalogues.

also are enrolled in an Integrating Seminar, a one credit-hour course taught by one of the three professors. The intent of the Integrating Seminar is to provide a time during the week when the students can examine the content from all the courses across their common theme, providing an intellectually integrative experience. Students who are liberal arts majors, receiving an Associate of Arts degree, are required to take one cluster during their program of studies.

Enterprise Center

The Enterprise Center offers clusters and pairs of courses in the business career areas of study (accounting, management, office technology, computer technology, programming and operations). As in the other learning communities, Enterprise clusters and pairs may be thematically linked, and a cohort of students attends classes together. Enterprise does not include Integrating Seminars, instead, some Enterprise learning communities are linked with New Student Seminars, and some are offered with study groups led by advanced students. These study groups are designed to allow students to spend more time with assignments, and have additional opportunities to ask questions. Typically, the study groups focus on work assigned in math, business, or computer courses. Enterprise courses meet major requirements, in most cases.

New Student House

The New Student House was modeled after liberal arts clusters, but is targeted at students who are at developmental levels of studies, as determined by placement exams. New Student House is composed of three courses--reading, writing, and oral communication--and a cohort of 20-25 students travel together to the same courses. Again, professors make an effort to coordinate assignments and materials, and occasionally the multiple sections of the New Student House meet as a large group (75 students) to share information and discussions across classes. In addition to classes, students in the New Student House meet for one hour per week as a class with an academic counselor in a New Student Seminar. For these students, the Integrating Seminar consists of academic advising, problem solving at LCC (answering questions about getting around and getting things done), study skills seminars, and test taking strategies. The counselor who teaches the seminar is a fully integrated member of the team who works closely with the faculty and is heavily involved in curricular planning. Students in the New Student House do not take any additional classes as a part of their schedule.

Cope program

The Cope program was new in the Spring of 1993, and was modeled after the various learning communities and other initiatives already underway at the College. Designed for students on public assistance, and grant funded by the Human Resources Administration, first students take a learning community, a New Student Seminar, a Career Development Seminar, and meet weekly with a public assistance office liaison. Some learning communities are at a developmental level, and include English, reading, and oral communication. Others are at a college level. A cohort of approximately 190 students were in the first section of the program. Registration in the Cope program constituted a full-time enrollment for those students.

As is evident from the descriptions above, many varieties of learning communities exist at LCC. Some consist of a developmental group of courses aimed at basic skills, others focus more on a specific major or career area. Some are pairs of courses with two professors, others consist of three professors offering a combined total of four courses (including the Integrated Seminar). All result in a cohort of students who travel from class to class together and spend anywhere from 8 to 16 hours together per week.

Learning Communities and Comparison Classrooms: A Note

Since so many faculty have participated in a learning community at one time or another, it was difficult, if not impossible, to construct a situation where we were able to compare the experience of students in a learning community to those in more traditional classrooms. There are very few classrooms in the College where one can say that the faculty are "traditional" in their teaching. The comparisons we made were invariably between learning community classrooms and other non-traditional types of classroom settings. For that reason, we have reason to believe that the following analyses understate the sorts of differences one might reasonably expect to find in a community college unlike LaGuardia where innovation in teaching was so widespread.

PART FOUR

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES AND PERSISTENCE OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The quantitative part of the study utilized two types of analyses. First, simple descriptive statistics were used to describe panel members and contrast the experiences of program students with those in comparison classes. Second, multivariate analyses (discriminant and logit regression) were utilized in order to determine to what degree program participation and other attributes of student experiences were related to subsequent outcomes, specifically persistence following the quarter in which the program took place, namely the Fall Quarter of the 1992-93 academic year.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The first questions we sought to answer were those of description and comparison. We wanted to know who participates in the learning communities (LCs) and how did their experience during the fall quarter differ from that of beginning students who were enrolled in the comparison classes. At the same time, we wanted to compare the outcomes (perceived gains, grade point average, credits earned, and persistence) for LC and comparison class students. T-tests and ANOVA were used to test the significance of group differences.

Attributes of First Year Learning Community and Comparison Class Students

As we consider the following data, the reader must be reminded that they refer not to all LC students, but only those who are in their first year at LaGuardia Community College. As a result, one cannot use these data to draw conclusions about the attributes of all LC students in the selected classes, some of whom are in their second or even third year at the College.

Looking first at information taken from the beginning Fall survey, it is apparent that first year students in the LC are somewhat younger on the average than are students in the comparison classes (Table 4-1). This is particularly evident among the youngest age categories. Slightly over half or 52.7 percent of the first-year LC students are nineteen years old or younger whereas only 41.7 percent of the comparison class students are of that age. Students in the Liberal Arts Cluster (LAC) are, on the average, younger than other LC students whereas New Student House (NSH) students are older. In the former cluster, 59.0 percent are nineteen years old or younger. Only 40.0 percent of NSH students are of that age group.

These difference are reflected in differences in family status (Table 4-2). Whereas LAC and EC students are less likely to be married than comparison class students, NSH students are as likely, if not more likely, to have family obligations than comparison class students. These differences in obligations extend as well to caring for others (Table 4-3). Again, though LC students are less likely, as a group, than comparison class students to be caring for others, NSH students are more likely to have responsibility for others than any other student group.[1] But as regards employment (Table 4-4), both groups are, on the average, similar in their work obligations. But again, students in the LAC are somewhat different from the other students in that they are the less likely to work -- 25.0 report employment -- than are other students.

---

[1] There are reasons to believe that these data tap the differences between NSH students and other students in the incidence of single-headed households with children. Simple comparisons of marriage status does not capture these differences.

TABLE 4-1

AGE DISTRIBUTION AMONG FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

AGE	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
18 or under	26.3 (41)	34.1 (44)	41.1 (23)	35.4 (17)	16.0 (4)
19	15.4 (24)	18.6 (24)	17.9 (10)	16.7 (8)	24.0 (6)
20	12.2 (19)	11.6 (15)	12.5 (7)	8.3 (4)	16.0 (4)
21	12.2 (19)	5.4 (7)	3.6 (2)	6.3 (3)	8.0 (2)
22 to 24	13.5 (21)	11.6 (15)	8.9 (5)	12.5 (6)	16.0 (4)
25 to 29	12.2 (19)	10.9 (14)	10.7 (6)	10.4 (5)	12.0 (3)
30 to 39	5.8 (9)	5.4 (7)	3.6 (2)	10.4 (5)	*
40 or over	2.6 (4)	2.3 (3)	1.8 (1)	*	8.0 (2)

COMP = Comparison classes
LC = Learning Community Classes
LAC = Liberal Art Cluster
EC = Enterprise Center
NSH = New Student House
* = Empty cell

TABLE 4-2

FAMILY STATUS OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FAMILY STATUS	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Unmarried (including single and widowed)	72.4 (113)	77.2 (98)	80.0 (44)	85.7 (42)	52.2 (12)
Married	15.4 (24)	10.2 (13)	9.1 (5)	6.1 (3)	21.7 (5)
Living with a partner	7.7 (12)	4.7 (6)	7.3 (4)	2.0 (1)	4.4 (1)
Separated/Divorce	4.5 (7)	7.9 (10)	3.6 (2)	6.1 (3)	21.7 (5)

TABLE 4-3

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARE OF OTHERS AMONG FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CARE OF OTHERS	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	22.6 (35)	17.3 (22)	12.7 (7)	10.6 (5)	40.0 (10)
No	77.4 (120)	82.7 (105)	87.3 (48)	89.4 (42)	60.0 (15)

TABLE 4-4

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT AMONG FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED?	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	33.8 (53)	33.8 (39)	25.0 (14)	34.7 (17)	33.3 (8)
No	66.2 (104)	66.2 (90)	75.0 (42)	65.3 (32)	66.7 (16)

As to their backgrounds, specifically the reported educational level of their parents, there does not appear to be any obvious differences between the various groups of students (Table 4-5). What is striking, however, is how many of the NSH students said they did not know the educational level of either their father (36.0 percent) or mother (20.8 percent). Since students in that program tend to be from more disadvantaged backgrounds, one can only assume that more complete data on the educational background of their parents would reveal a lower aggregate level of parental education.

TABLE 4-5

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY PARENTS OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR FATHER	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Grammar school or less	13.1 (20)	10.5 (13)	7.8 (4)	16.7 (8)	4.0 (1)
Some high school	14.4 (22)	12.1 (15)	9.8 (5)	12.5 (6)	16.0 (4)
High school graduate	25.5 (39)	21.8 (27)	25.5 (13)	20.8 (10)	16.0 (4)
Post secondary other than college	3.9 (6)	4.0 (5)	3.9 (2)	6.3 (3)	*
Some college	7.2 (11)	8.9 (11)	11.8 (6)	6.3 (3)	8.0 (2)
College Degree	14.4 (22)	14.5 (18)	9.8 (5)	18.8 (9)	16.0 (4)
More than college degree	7.8 (12)	6.4 (8)	7.8 (4)	6.3 (3)	4.0 (1)
Do not know	13.7 (21)	21.8 (27)	23.5 (12)	12.5 (6)	36.0 (9)

TABLE 4-5 (continued)

DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR MOTHER	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Grammar school or less	16.0 (24)	12.2 (17)	7.4 (4)	15.6 (7)	20.8 (5)
Some high school	21.3 (32)	18.7 (26)	20.4 (11)	20.0 (9)	20.8 (5)
High school graduate	25.3 (38)	23.7 (33)	22.2 (12)	31.1 (14)	12.5 (3)
Post secondary other than college	8.0 (12)	5.8 (8)	1.9 (1)	4.4 (2)	*
Some college	4.0 (6)	8.9 (11)	7.4 (4)	8.9 (4)	12.5 (3)
College Degree	10.7 (16)	13.8 (17)	18.5 (10)	8.9 (4)	12.5 (3)
More than college degree	6.0 (9)	4.9 (6)	5.6 (3)	6.7 (3)	*
Do not know	8.7 (13)	13.0 (16)	16.7 (9)	4.4 (2)	20.8 (5)

As to the important issue of academic preparation, students in the learning communities, as a group, report having obtained somewhat lower high school grade point averages (Table 4-6). Whereas 57.1 percent of comparison class students reported having earned at least a B average in high school, only 36.8 percent of LC students do. At the same time, while only 3.6 percent of comparison class students report having earned an average of C or less, 11.1 percent of LC students report similar grades. Understandably, the difference in high school performance is clearest among NSH students.

TABLE 4-6

OVERALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
B+ to A (86-100)	11.3 (17)	8.7 (11)	5.4 (3)	17.0 (8)	*
B to B+ (81-85)	36.0 (54)	28.6 (36)	20.0 (11)	34.0 (16)	37.5 (9)
C+ to B (76-80)	32.0 (48)	34.1 (43)	36.4 (20)	36.2 (17)	25.0 (6)
C to C+ (71-75)	16.7 (25)	17.5 (22)	21.8 (12)	10.6 (5)	20.8 (5)
D to C (65-70)	2.7 (4)	9.5 (12)	16.4 (9)	*	12.5 (3)
Below D (-65)	1.3 (2)	1.6 (2)	*	2.1 (1)	4.2 (1)

Differences in self-reported high school performance are mirrored in students estimates of their abilities for college work (Table 4-7). Among the three learning communities, students in the NSH have lower estimates of their abilities, specifically in their ability to write, read, comprehend written material and speak clearly. By contrast, students in the Liberal Arts Cluster see themselves as more able than did comparison class students in their ability to use English, comprehend written material and speak clearly and effectively. Enterprise Center students, in this regard, saw themselves as somewhat more confident of their ability to use mathematics.

TABLE 4-7

PERCEIVED LEVELS OF PREPAREDNESS FOR COLLEGE WORK AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

PERFORMANCE CATEGORY	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Ability to write standard English	2.78	3.01 *	3.25 *	2.90	2.68 -
Ability to write well-organized paper	2.57	2.58	2.82 *	2.45	2.28 -
Ability to write research paper	2.35	2.37	2.47	2.37	2.10 -
Reading comprehension	2.80	2.88	3.09 *	2.90	2.38 -
Ability to speak clearly, effectively	2.72	2.93 *	3.14 *	2.86	2.58 -
Ability to Manage Time	2.85	2.86	2.79	2.85	3.04
Ability to use general mathematics	2.48	2.58	2.47	2.66 *	2.68
Use a foreign language	2.56	2.47	2.26 -	2.56	2.77
Ability to find library materials	2.79	2.72	2.70	2.71	2.76
Study skills for effective learning	2.72	2.72	2.75	2.67	2.75
Mean Estimates	2.66	2.70	2.77	2.65	2.60

where 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good.
* = significantly higher than comparison group at .05 level.
- = significantly lower than comparison group at .05 level.

When asked about their estimates of the likelihood of different events, LC students report themselves less likely to need extra time to complete their degree (2.58 to 2.83) and more likely to transfer before graduating (2.44 and 2.33) (Table 4-8). This latter difference mirrors the fact that LC students are somewhat more likely to aspire to a four-year degree or more than were students in the comparison classes (see Table B-X in Appendix B). These differences mask, however, important differences among students in the different learning communities, in particular those between NSH students and other learning community students (LAC and EC). Unlike LC students generally, NSH students saw themselves as more likely to need extra time to complete their degree (3.04) and more likely to make at least a B average in college (3.29). At the same time, they see themselves as less likely to transfer before graduating (2.04) and drop out of college temporarily (1.26).

TABLE 4-8

ESTIMATES OF CHANCES TO COMPLETE DIFFERENT TASKS AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

ESTIMATE OF CHANCES	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Need extra time to complete degree	2.83	2.58	2.49	2.54	3.04 *
Drop out of college temporarily	1.36	1.31	1.36	1.26	1.26
Transfer to another college before graduating	2.33	2.44	2.55	2.59	2.04 -
Make at least a "B" average	1.56	1.50	1.46	1.37	3.29 *

where 1 = no chance, 2 = very little chance, 3 = some chance, 4 = very good chance.
* = significantly higher than comparison group at .05 level.
- = significantly lower than comparison group at .05 level.

Finally, when asked about their preferred class format and style of learning (Table 4-9 and Table 4-10). Comparison class students are more likely to favor lecture type class format and studying alone, whereas LC students are somewhat more likely to prefer study groups and learning either with friends or in discussion type settings. It is perhaps understandable that NSH students prefer working in study groups and learning with tutors.

TABLE 4-9

TYPE OF CLASS FORMAT PREFERRED AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CLASS FORMAT	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Lecture format	18.5 (28)	10.3 (13)	9.1 (5)	12.5 (6)	8.7 (2)
Small-group format	37.1 (56)	38.1 (48)	36.4 (20)	41.7 (20)	34.8 (8)
Independent study contract	6.6 (10)	2.4 (3)	1.8 (1)	1.8 (1)	4.4 (1)
Laboratory or shop	6.0 (9)	10.3 (13)	7.3 (4)	16.7 (8)	4.4 (1)
Study group	15.2 (23)	15.9 (20)	14.6 (8)	6.3 (3)	39.1 (9)
Correspondence course	1.3 (2)	2.4 (3)	1.8 (1)	4.2 (2)	*
Other	2.0 (3)	1.6 (2)	1.8 (1)	2.1 (1)	*
No Preference	13.3 (20)	19.1 (24)	27.3 (15)	14.6 (7)	8.7 (2)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE 4-10

PREFERRED STYLE OF LEARNING AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CLASS FORMAT	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Alone	25.3 (39)	14.5 (18)	16.7 (9)	14.9 (7)	8.7 (2)
With friends	9.7 (15)	18.6 (23)	20.4 (11)	17.1 (8)	17.4 (4)
Being tutored	14.3 (22)	11.3 (14)	3.7 (2)	14.9 (7)	21.7 (5)
In a classroom lecture	11.7 (18)	8.1 (10)	3.7 (2)	10.6 (5)	13.0 (3)
In a classroom discussion	35.1 (54)	33.9 (42)	38.9 (21)	27.7 (13)	34.8 (8)
In a laboratory or shop	0.7 (1)	4.8 (6)	1.9 (1)	10.6 (5)	*
Do not know	3.3 (5)	8.1 (10)	14.8 (8)	4.2 (2)	*

where * indicates empty cell

It must be observed that these data cannot be easily ascribed to self-selection of students into the LC classes. As noted earlier, many students who enrolled very late in the registration process choose LC classes because they had few, if any, options. Others, as we discovered in the qualitative part of the study, selected the LC classes because of their interest in the content of the class. They had little if any knowledge beforehand of the pedagogical character of the course and therefore would not have been likely to have selected the course because of their preference for a particular style of teaching and learning. Also, Liberal Arts students are required to enroll in a cluster during the semester that they take ENG 101. No self-selection is involved in this program.

Experiences of First Year Students in LC and Comparison Classes

Near the very end of the quarter, information was obtained via a second questionnaire on the activities, estimates of gains, perceptions of environment, and expectations regarding continued persistence. We now turn to these data, specifically to differences in patterns of classroom and out-of-classroom activities among first year students in the LC and comparison classes (Tables 4-11 to 4-13). Afterwards, we will look at differences among the different learning community classes (Tables 4-14 to 4-16).

TABLE 4-11

FIRST QUARTER EXPERIENCES OF FIRST YEAR LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

COURSE ACTIVITIES

	LC	COMP
Participated in class discussions	2.76	2.81
Worked on a paper or project which combined ideas from different sources of information	2.81	2.79
Summarized major points and information from readings or notes	2.88	2.91
Tried to explain the material to another student.	2.62	2.71
Did additional readings on topics that were introduced and discussed in class.	2.28	2.46
Asked questions about points made in class discussions or readings	2.56	2.77
Studied course materials with other students.	2.18	2.18
Applied principles and concepts learned in class to understand other problems or situations	2.54	2.59
Compared and contrasted different points of view presented in a course	2.58	2.67
Considered the accuracy and credibility of information from different sources.	2.53	2.50
Participated in self-assessment activities	2.27	2.38
Participated in classes in which course content and curriculum were coordinated with that of other classes	2.94 *	2.20

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

	LC	COMP
Used the library as a quiet place to read or study material you brought with you.	2.18	2.72 *
Read newspapers, magazines, or journals located in the library	2.10	2.28
Checked out books to read at home.	1.83	2.21 *
Used the card catalogue or computer to find materials the library had on a topic	2.48	2.50
Prepared a bibliography or set of references for a term paper or report.	2.27	2.26
Asked the librarian for help in finding materials	2.28	2.36
Found some interesting materials to read just by browsing in the stacks	2.12	2.21

FACULTY

	LC	COMP
Asked an instructor for information about grades, make-up work assignments, etc..	2.43	2.38
Talked briefly with an instructor after class about course content.	2.35	2.38
Made an appointment to meet with an instructor in his/her office.	1.73	1.82
Discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with an instructor.	2.25	2.20
Discussed your career and/or educational plans, interests, and ambitions with an instructor.	2.03	1.97
Discussed comments an instructor made on a test paper or paper you wrote	2.22	2.44
Talked informally with an instructor about current events, campus activities, or other common interests	1.71	1.86
Discussed your school performance, personal problems or difficulties with an instructor	1.68	1.73
Consulted with a faculty advisor about registration	2.12	2.18

STUDENT ACQUAINTANCES

	LC	COMP
Had serious discussions with students who were much older or younger than you.	2.27	2.13
Had serious discussions with students whose ethnic or cultural background was different than yours	2.43	2.32
Had serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values were different from yours	2.32	2.20
Had serious discussions with students whose political opinions were different from yours	2.01	2.08
Had serious discussions with students whose religious beliefs were different from yours	2.02	2.08
Had serious discussions with students from a country different from yours.	2.38	2.36

WRITING ACTIVITIES

	LC	COMP
Used a dictionary to look up the proper meaning, definition, and/or spelling of words	3.05	3.16
Prepared an outline to organize the sequence of ideas and points in a paper you were writing	2.84	2.94
Thought about grammar, sentence structure, paragraphs and word choices as you were writing	3.09	3.17
Wrote a rough draft of a paper or essay and revised it before handing it in	3.10	3.10
Used a computer (word processor) to write or type a paper.	3.25 *	2.46
Asked other people to read something you wrote to see if it was clear to them.	2.82	2.71
Spent at least 5 hours or more writing a paper	2.65	2.61
Asked an instructor for advice and help to improve your writing or about a comment he/she made on a paper you wrote.	2.65	2.59
Submitted an outline and/or draft along with a final paper	2.10	2.29

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

	LC	COMP
Looked in the student newspaper or on bulletin boards for notices about campus events and student organizations.	2.04	2.09
Read or asked about a student club or organization	1.73	1.89
Attended a meeting of a student club or organization	1.33	1.37

ARTS, MUSIC, AND THEATER ACTIVITIES

	LC	COMP
Talked about art (painting, sculpture, architecture, artists, etc.) with other students at the college.	2.02 *	1.63
Talked about music (classical, popular, musicians,etc.) with other students at the college	2.28 *	1.91
Talked about theater (plays, musicals, dance, etc.) with other students at the college	1.92	1.72
Attended or participated in an art or film exhibit at the college	1.31	1.26
Attended or participated in a concert or other musical event at the college .	1.30	1.27
Attended or participated in a play, dance concert, or other theater performance at the college	1.22	1.25

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Student responses to differing activities (Table 4-11) indicate that the activities of LC and Comparison are, for the most part, very similar. The two domains of activities where the two groups differ somewhat are in Library Activities and Student Acquaintances. In the former, Comparison group students report themselves to be somewhat more actively involved in use of the library as a place of study (2.72 vs. 2.18) and in checking out books to read at home (2.21 vs. 1.83). On the other hand, LC students report themselves more likely to use a computer to write (3.25 vs. 2.46) and more actively involved in discussions of art and music (2.02 and 2.28 vs. 1.63 and 1.91 respectively). But when items scores within each domain are summed into Factor Scores (Table 4-12), only differences in Library activities remain significant. In this case, LC students, as a group, score lower on library activities (2.18 vs. 2.36) than do students in the comparison classes.

TABLE 4-12

ACTIVITY FACTOR SCORES FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

FACTOR SCORE	LC	COMPARISON
Course	2.57	2.58
Library	2.18	2.36 *
Faculty	2.06	2.11
Students	2.24	2.19
Writing	2.84	2.78
Clubs	1.71	1.78
Arts	1.67	1.50

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

When asked about their assessment of their gains over the course of the first quarter, it is again the case that there is little overall difference between LC and Comparison group students (Table 4-13). The Gain Factor Scores are identical (2.66 and 2.66). And though there are a few differences on individual items, there is no obvious pattern to those significant differences. Nevertheless, LC students tend, as a group, to report somewhat higher levels of gains in those areas that call for developing understandings of different philosophies and fields of knowledge, and the ability to put different ideas and relationships together. Perhaps this reflects the fact that LC students also report somewhat higher involvement with students of different cultural backgrounds and philosophies than did students in the comparison classrooms (Table 4-11).

TABLE 4-13

ESTIMATE OF FIRST QUARTER GAINS BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

I HAVE GAINED OR MADE PROGRESS IN:	LC	COMP
Acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific job or type of work	2.50	2.45
Gaining information about career opportunities	2.63	2.79
Developing clearer career goals	2.74	2.77
Becoming acquainted with different fields of knowledge	2.71	2.56
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of art, music, and theater	2.03	1.94
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of literature (novels, stories, essays, poetry, etc.)	2.65	2.49
Writing clearly and effectively	3.05	2.92
Presenting ideas and information effectively in speaking in others	2.81	2.86
Acquiring the ability to use computers	3.17 *	2.56
Becoming aware of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life	2.95	2.76
Becoming clearer about my own values and ethical standards	3.09	3.08
Understanding myself – my abilities and interests	3.17	3.24
Understanding mathematical concepts such as probabilities, proportions, etc.	2.16	2.64 *
Understanding the role of science and technology in society	2.47	2.43
Putting ideas together to see relationships, similarities, and differences between ideas	2.91	2.78
Developing the ability to learn on my own, pursue ideas, and find information I need	2.94	2.94
Developing the ability to speak and understand another language	2.03	2.28
Interpreting information in graphs and charts I see in newspapers, textbooks, and on TV	2.33	2.42
Developing an interest in political and economic events	2.41	2.30
Seeing the importance of history for understanding the present and the past	2.70	2.63
Learning more about other parts of the world and other people (Asia, Africa, South America, etc.)	2.39	2.54
Understanding other people	2.93	3.06
Getting along with different kinds of people	3.20	3.07
Developing good health habits and physical fitness	2.47	2.75 *
Becoming active in local/state/national/global issues	1.96	2.22 *
GAIN FACTOR SCORE	2.66	2.66

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Though there appear to be few overall differences in reported activities and gains between learning community and comparison class students, differences do appear once learning community students are disaggregated by the specific learning community program in which they participated, namely Liberal Arts Cluster (LAC), Enterprise Center (EC), and New Student House (NSH). These differences are described in Tables 4-14 and 4-15.

Turning first to students in the Liberal Arts Cluster (LAC), they report themselves more involved than comparison class students in only two areas of activity, namely student acquaintances and arts. In the former, they report more involvement with student acquaintances along a variety of items, whereas in the latter, they score higher on only two items (art and music). In the area of faculty, however, all significant differences in item responses were in favor of the comparison class students (nevertheless, the aggregate factor scores on that area of activity were not significantly different). In other areas of activity item scores did not show any clear pattern of difference between the two groups.

Students in the Enterprise Center (EC) are, with the exception of library activities, very similar to comparison class students in their patterns of involvement. In the use of the library, however, there are consistently less involved in library activities than are comparison class students.

The same statement can be made of students in the New Student House. Like EC students, they report lower involvement in library activities than do students in the comparison classes. In most other areas, however, they tend to be more involved. In course activities, faculty contact, writing, and art, music, and theater they report more involvement. Indeed, on those domains of activity, they report more involvement than all other student groups, learning community or comparison. Given the obvious linkage between course activities and patterns of faculty student interactions, one would have to believe, at this point of the analysis, that these differences mirror the specific nature and intent of the NSH program, namely to provide at-risk students with an intensive learning environment in which students are asked to learn. While the same pattern is exhibited in the domains of clubs and arts, it is also the case that the scores on most items are quite low, that is to say near and below two on a four-point scale.

TABLE 4-14

FIRST QUARTER EXPERIENCES OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN COMPARISON AND DIFFERENT LEARNING COMMUNITY CLASSES

COURSE ACTIVITIES	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Participated in class discussions	2.81	2.80	2.76	2.68
Worked on a paper or project which combined ideas from different sources of information	2.79	3.05 *	2.65	2.60
Summarized major points and information from readings or notes	2.91	2.89	2.82	3.00
Tried to explain the material to another student.	2.71	2.45	2.82	2.63
Did additional readings on topics that were introduced and discussed in class.	2.46	2.18 -	2.10 -	2.84 *
Asked questions about points made in class discussions or readings	2.77	2.64	2.39	2.74
Studied course materials with other students.	2.18	1.93	2.33	2.44 *
Applied principles and concepts learned in class to understand other problems or situations	2.59	2.71	2.43	2.40
Compared and contrasted different points of view presented in a course	2.67	2.66	2.40 -	2.76
Considered the accuracy and credibility of information from different sources.	2.50	2.58	2.39	2.72
Participated in self-assessment activities	2.38	2.27	2.10	2.60 *
Participated in classes in which course content and curriculum were coordinated with that of other classes	2.20	3.05 *	2.90 *	2.79 *

LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Used the library as a quiet place to read or study material you brought with you.	2.72	2.26 -	2.04 -	2.24
Read newspapers, magazines, or journals located in the library	2.28	2.25	1.98	2.00
Checked out books to read at home.	2.21	1.98	1.65	1.84
Used the card catalogue or computer to find materials the library had on a topic	2.50	3.02 *	2.27	1.72
Prepared a bibliography or set of references for a term paper or report.	2.26	2.81 *	1.96	1.72
Asked the librarian for help in finding materials	2.36	2.58	2.00	2.16
Found some interesting materials to read just by browsing in the stacks	2.21	2.22	2.12	1.87

FACULTY

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Asked an instructor for information about grades, make-up work assignments, etc.	2.38	2.44	2.35	2.60
Talked briefly with an instructor after class about course content.	2.38	2.36	2.29	2.48
Made an appointment to meet with an instructor in his/her office.	1.82	1.88	1.54	1.76
Discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with an instructor.	2.20	2.36	2.15	2.20
Discussed your career and/or educational plans, interests, and ambitions with an instructor.	1.97	1.76	2.14	2.40
Discussed comments an instructor made on a test paper or paper you wrote	2.44	2.20	2.06	2.56
Talked informally with an instructor about current events, campus activities, or other common interests	1.86	1.57	1.73	1.96
Discussed your school performance, personal problems or difficulties with an instructor	1.73	1.52	1.78	1.88
Consulted with a faculty advisor about registration	2.18	2.00	2.02	2.56

STUDENT ACQUAINTANCES

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Had serious discussions with students who were much older or younger than you.	2.13	2.43	2.20	2.04
Had serious discussions with students whose ethnic or cultural background was different than yours	2.32	2.57	2.29	2.36
Had serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values were different from yours	2.20	2.46	2.27	2.12
Had serious discussions with students whose political opinions were different from yours	2.08	2.30	1.90	1.56
Had serious discussions with students whose religious beliefs were different from yours	2.08	2.27	1.82	1.84
Had serious discussions with students from a country different from yours.	2.36	2.48	2.35	2.20

WRITING ACTIVITIES

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Used a dictionary to look up the proper meaning, definition, and/or spelling of words	3.16	3.00	3.00	3.28
Prepared an outline to organize the sequence of ideas and points in a paper you were writing	2.94	2.89	2.80	2.80
Thought about grammar, sentence structure, paragraphs and word choices as you were writing	3.17	3.20	2.98	3.08
Wrote a rough draft of a paper or essay and revised it before handing it in	3.10	3.16	3.02	3.12
Used a computer (word processor) to write or type a paper.	2.46	3.07 *	3.20 *	3.76 *
Asked other people to read something you wrote to see if it was clear to them.	2.71	2.64	2.81	3.24
Spent at least 5 hours or more writing a paper	2.61	2.89	2.55	2.32
Asked an instructor for advice and help to improve your writing or about a comment he/she made on a paper you wrote.	2.59	2.54	2.47	3.24
Submitted an outline and/or draft along with a final paper	2.29	2.31	1.84 -	2.16

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Looked in the student newspaper or on bulletin boards for notices about campus events and student organizations	2.09	1.95	1.98	2.20
Read or asked about a student club or organization	1.89	1.77	1.55	1.96
Attended a meeting of a student club or organization	1.37	1.28	1.18	1.64

ARTS, MUSIC, AND THEATER ACTIVITIES

	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Talked about art (painting, sculpture, architecture, artists, etc.) with other students at the college	1.63	2.18 *	2.02 *	1.68
Talked about music (classical, popular, musicians,etc.) with other students at the college	1.91	2.54 *	2.25 *	1.76
Talked about theater (plays, musicals, dance, etc.) with other students at the college	1.72	1.89	1.85	2.12
Attended or participated in an art or film exhibit on campus	1.26	1.25	1.19	1.68
Attended or participated in a concert or other musical event on campus	1.27	1.27	1.21	1.56
Attended or participated in a play, dance concert, or other theater performance on campus	1.25	1.14	1.15	1.52

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

The above differences are summarized in the form of factor scores in Table 4-15. In addition to reaffirming differences noted above, these data also point out the high degree of involvement, among all students but especially NSH students, in writing activities. On a four-point scale, the mean factor scores on writing range from 2.74 to 3.00. Clearly, writing is an important part of all student experience in all classes studied.

TABLE 4-15

ACTIVITY FACTOR SCORES FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASSES

FACTOR SCORE	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Course	2.58	2.58	2.60	2.51	2.68
Library	2.36	2.18	2.44	2.00 -	1.94 -
Faculty	2.11	2.06	2.01	2.01	2.27 *
Students	2.19	2.24	2.42 *	2.14	2.02 -
Writing	2.78	2.84	2.86	2.74	3.00 *
Clubs	1.78	1.71	1.73	1.57	1.93 *
Arts	1.50	1.67	1.71 *	1.61	1.72 *

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Turning now to self-reported gains over the course of the first quarter, we again discover how important it is to distinguish between the experiences of students in different learning community programs (Table 4-16). But though it is quite apparent that the perceptions of learning gains over the course of the quarter differ for the different groups of students, there is no obvious general pattern to those differences. Nevertheless some differences emerge which do seem to reflect differences in program intent and perhaps program impact.

As for students in the New Student House, they more frequently see themselves as having made greater gains than comparison class students, as a group, than do other learning community program students. This is particularly evident on those items that concern issues of self-reflection (items 11) and learning about different people and cultures (items 10, 21, and 23). By contrast, Enterprise Center students report greater gains (relative to comparison group students as a group) in the areas of work (item 1), fields of knowledge (item 4), mathematics (item 13), and the use of computers (item 9), but lower gain along a range of items (10, 17, 19 thru 22) that might be said to reflect a more liberal arts perspective. Not surprisingly, LAC students report greater gains on a number of items (5-6 and 19-20) that do mirror that perspective.

TABLE 4-16

ESTIMATE OF FIRST QUARTER GAINS BY FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN COMPARISON AND DIFFERENT LEARNING COMMUNITY CLASSES

I HAVE GAINED OR MADE PROGRESS IN:	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific job or type of work	2.45	2.42	2.69	2.29
Gaining information about career opportunities	2.79	2.36	2.86	2.80
Developing clearer career goals	2.77	2.54	2.94	2.84
Becoming acquainted with different fields of knowledge	2.56	2.71	2.92	2.28
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of art, music, and theater	1.94	2.20	2.00	1.72
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of literature (novels, stories, essays, poetry, etc.)	2.49	2.79 *	2.41	2.80
Writing clearly and effectively	2.92	3.04	3.12	2.96
Presenting ideas and information effectively in speaking in others	2.86	2.73	2.82	2.96
Acquiring the ability to use computers	2.56	2.83 *	3.42 *	3.46 *
Becoming aware of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life	2.76	3.27 *	2.47	3.16 *
Becoming clearer about my own values and ethical standards	3.08	3.00	3.06	3.32
Understanding myself – my abilities and interests	3.24	2.91	3.37	3.38
Understanding mathematical concepts such as probabilities, proportions, etc.	2.64	2.62	2.80	2.12
Understanding the role of science and technology in society	2.43	2.25	2.65	2.56
Putting ideas together to see relationships, similarities, and differences between ideas	2.78	2.86	2.86	3.17
Developing the ability to learn on my own, pursue ideas, and find information I need	2.94	2.84	3.00	3.04
Developing the ability to speak and understand another language	2.28	1.80 -	2.12	2.36
Interpreting information in graphs and charts I see in newspapers, textbooks, and on TV	2.42	2.30	2.38	2.32
Developing an interest in political and economic events	2.30	2.80 *	2.02	2.28
Seeing the importance of history for understanding the present and the past	2.63	2.95	2.39	2.75
Learning more about other parts of the world and other people (Asia, Africa, South America, etc.)	2.54	2.33	2.22	2.84
Understanding other people	3.06	2.93	2.82	3.16
Getting along with different kinds of people	3.07	3.18	3.12	3.40 *
Developing good health habits and physical fitness	2.75	2.16	2.63	2.84
Becoming active in local/state/national/global issues	2.22	1.95	1.94	2.04
GAIN FACTOR SCORE	2.66	2.60	2.68	2.75

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

Though the above data cannot be said to describe marked differences between comparison class and learning community students, the same cannot be said of the data on students perceptions of the college environment (Table 4-17). On a variety of environmental scales, learning community students are consistently more positive in their views of the college than are students in the comparison classes (mean environment scores of 5.30 verses 5.06). As a group, first year students in the learning communities were more positive on all environmental scales and significantly more positive in their views of classes, other students, faculty, counselors, and of the campus climate. And this holds despite the fact that LC students did not show any widespread difference in patterns of involvement relative to comparison class students.

TABLE 4-17

PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

PERCEPTIONS OF:	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Classes	5.06	5.23 *	5.18	5.02	5.78 *
Other Students	5.22	5.69 *	5.50 *	5.82 *	5.87 *
Faculty	5.12	5.71 *	5.71 *	5.53 *	6.09 *
Counselors	5.27	5.59 *	5.43	5.45	6.26 *
Administrators	4.63	4.75	4.43	4.83	5.30 *
Office Staff	4.56	4.65	4.47	4.48	5.39 *
Campus Climate	5.14	5.38 *	5.30 *	5.37 *	5.61 *
Yourself	5.26	5.44 *	5.23	5.55	5.96 *
MEAN SCORE	5.06	5.30 *	5.14	5.26 *	5.78 *

where * indicates a significant difference between groups at the .05 level.

When learning community students are disaggregated by program, it becomes quite evident that NSH students are much more positive in their view of the college environment than are all other students, learning community and comparison. On all environmental measures from classes to campus climate, NSH students are significantly more positive in their views than are comparison class students. Though both the LAC and EC students are more positive than comparison class students on a variety of environmental items (e.g. other students and faculty), it is clear that NSH students stand out from all other groups. Equally important, first year students in the NSH program saw themselves as more involved than did all other first year students (5.96 vs. 5.26 for comparison class students and 5.23 and 5.55 for LAC and EC students).

Academic Performance and Persistence Among First-Year LC and Comparison Class Students

Given these data, the question still remains as to the academic performance and persistence of students in the learning community programs and the comparison classes. These data, drawn from institutional records of student earned credit, academic performance, and re-enrollment in the Spring and following Fall semesters, are shown below in Table 4-18 and Table 4-19.

Table 4-18 provides data on earned credits (for Fall and Spring Quarters and First Year) and grade point average (GPA) for the first year of college. Learning community students performed somewhat better than did comparison class students over the course of the academic year (2.68 vs. 2.64) with students in the Enterprise Center earning higher grades, on the average, than all other students groups. In this respect it is important to recall that earlier data (Table 4-6) indicate that LC students generally and NSH students in particular report themselves as somewhat less able (self-reported high school grades) than did comparison students. That they do as well as, if not better, in college than do comparison class students is a significant finding, one that is understated in Table 8-18.

At the same time, students in the learning communities earned more credits in each of the quarters than did students in the comparison classes -- the result being an accumulative earned credit difference of over 3 credits (i.e. 20.56 verses 17.35). That New Student House students have so few earned credits reflects the particular nature of their program and the way credits are allocated for different coursework in that program.

TABLE 4-18

EARNED CREDITS AND GRADE POINT AVERAGE AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

STUDENT POPULATION	CREDITS			GPA
	Fall	Spring	Accumulative after one year	
Comparison Classes (N=211)	8.46	8.89	17.35	2.64
Learning Community Classes (N=126)	11.16	9.40	20.56	2.68
Liberal Arts Cluster (N=49)	13.45	9.63	23.08	2.49
Enterprise Center (N=52)	11.59	10.02	21.61	2.81
New Student House (N=25)	5.76	7.64	13.40	2.75

where * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level.

As regards persistence to the following fall semester, there was little difference among the first year students in learning community and comparison classes in persistence to the spring quarter and to the start of the following fall quarter as shown in Table 4-19. Both groups persist at about 91 and 76-77 percent respectively for the following spring and fall semesters. Among students in the different learning community programs, EC students had higher persistence rates (98.0 percent) in the spring, whereas only LAC students had higher persistence in the following fall semester (83.7). NSH students were somewhat lower in persistence in both semesters, most noticeably in the spring semester.

TABLE 4-19

SPRING AND FALL PERSISTENCE AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

STUDENT POPULATION	SPRING	FALL
Comparison Classes (N=158)	91.5	75.9
Learning Community Classes (N=130)	91.1	77.7
Liberal Arts Cluster (N=56)	89.3	75.0
Enterprise Center (N=49)	98.0	83.7
New Student House (N=25)	84.0	72.0

where * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level.

Comparison of fall to fall persistence rates substantially underestimate, however, the full impact of participation in a learning community upon students' college education. This is the case because many students, after entering a learning community, decide to "raise their sights" and transfer to a four-year college (see chapter five, pp. 83-4). When we include estimates of transfer that are obtained from a question students answered about their intent

to transfer the following semester (assuming their were not returning to LCC) we can construct a new variable called 'college continuation.' When we do so, we find that students in learning communities have substantially higher rates of continuation than do students in comparison classes (Table 4-20). This holds for learning communities generally (88.5 percent) and each of three distinct programs, Liberal Arts Cluster (87.5), Enterprise Center (91.8), and New Student House (84.0 percent).

TABLE 4-20

ESTIMATED RATES OF COLLEGE CONTINUATION AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

STUDENT POPULATION	RATE OF CONTINUATION
Comparison Classes (N=158)	77.9
Learning Community Classes (N=130)	88.5 *
Liberal Arts Cluster (N=56)	87.5 *
Enterprise Center (N=49)	91.8 *
New Student House (N=25)	84.0 *

where * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level.

It must also be observed that the comparison between NSH and comparison class students made in Table 4-18 is not a fair one. It is likely to understate the impact of the program on students because the comparison class students consist of both regularly and specially admitted students. A study of persistence of the NSH students carried out by LaGuardia Community College which employed a strict control group of similar students indicated a positive difference in persistence in the following fall of slightly over seven percent (Storck, 1994). In any event, it must be recognized that rates of persistence and continuation are high by any community college standard, urban or suburban. And they are remarkably high for students in the New Student House program who are considered to be academically, if not socially, disadvantaged.

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Though informative, the above descriptive analysis does not demonstrate that participation in the LC classes is independently associated with enhanced persistence. It merely suggests an association that is univariate in character. To test the question of independent association we now turn to several forms of multi-variate analysis, specifically discriminant and regression analysis.

Discriminant Analysis

First, a stepwise discriminant analysis was carried out on persistence into the fall quarter (1,0) as the dependent variable. Independent variables were added stepwise according to a conceptual scheme that added background variables first, followed by entry characteristic variables (including participation in LCs), then by experience variables, and finally by gain and perception variables. As the analysis proceeds, only those variables remain in the discriminant function that serve to significantly discriminate between the dependent groups (1,0). The results of this analysis are shown below in Table 4-20. Only those variables whose probability of $F < 0.05$ are shown.

TABLE 4-20

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS ON PERSISTENCE FOR LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

Variable	Partial R^2	F Statistic	Prob > F
FACULTY	0.024	5.187	0.024
GPA	0.047	10.465	0.001
LIBRARY	0.012	2.595	0.100

where: FACULTY = interactions with faculty.
GPA = grade point average as of spring semester.
LIBRARY = use of library facilities.

Three variables discriminate between stayers and leavers, first year grade point average, interaction with faculty, and use of library facilities. The first finding, that persons with higher first year grade point average are more likely to persist to the following fall, is entirely understandable. Grade point average measures many of the same domains of activity that underlie persistence. The second finding, that persons who interact more with faculty are more likely to persist, is also understandable. Various researchers including Tinto (1987) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1992) have found that interaction with faculty is one of the most powerful predictors of subsequent persistence. The use of library facilities also serves to distinguish between stayers and leavers. Not surprisingly, students who make greater use of the library -- those who are by definition more involved in their studies -- are also more likely to return in the following academic year.

In this analysis, that is one which focuses on persistence rather than continuation, membership in a learning community did not prove to independently distinguish between staying and leaving. Overall differences in persistence between the two groups was small (77.7 vs. 75.9) and quite possibly taken up by differences between the two groups in earned credit and grade point average.

Regression Analysis

The next step in the analysis was a stepwise logit regression on persistence. The logistic regression equation sought to predict second year persistence as a function of the independent and treatment variables. The same ordering of variable sets used in the discriminant analysis was employed in both analyses. Logit regression was utilized because the dependent variable, persistence, is a categorical (1,0) variable. One interprets parameters in a logistic regression as specifying how changes in an independent variable increase or decrease the likelihood of persisting onto the second year. The results of these analyses are presented below in Table 4-21. As in the discriminant analysis, only those variables are shown that are significant at the .10 level.

TABLE 4-21

LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON PERSISTENCE AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	P > Chi-Square
GPA	0.841	0.256	10.734	0.001
ENVIRON3	0.302	0.199	2.292	0.100

where: GPA = grade point average as of spring semester.
ENVIRON3 = perceptions of faculty.

In this case, only first year grade point average and perceptions of faculty predicted persistence among first year students at LaGuardia Community College. In the latter case, students who held more favorable views of faculty were more likely to return in the second year of college than were students who held less favorable views. Though being part of a learning community did not prove to be an independent predictor of persistence, it is noteworthy that learning community students held substantially more positive views of faculty than did students in comparison classes (5.71 vs. 5.12) (see Table 4-12). As a result, it may be that the "effect" of being in a learning community upon persistence is largely indirect, in this instance via its impact upon students views of faculty.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS: SUMMARY

The quantitative analyses reveal few differences between first year students in the learning community programs and the comparison classes, at least as it relates to their activities. Students in learning communities, as a group, reported very similar activity levels activities, in and outside class, as did students in the comparison classes. As a group, their frequency and patterns of interaction with the faculty, other students, and in a variety of learning domains were very similar. The one exception were students in the New Student House program. On the areas of faculty interaction, writing, participation in clubs, and in the arts, they reported significantly more activity than all other groups, learning community and comparison.

Similarities in activities were not reflected in patterns of perceptions. Student in learning communities of all types were significantly more positive in their perceptions of their classes, other students, faculty, counselors, the campus climate, and their own involvement than were students in the comparison classes. Again, this was most noticeably among students in the New Student House program. They were more positive in their views of all aspects of the college.

Differences in perceptions were translated into small but noticeable differences both in earned credit and accumulative grade point average during the academic year. In all cases, save for the Liberal Arts Cluster students, students in learning communities outperformed students in the comparison classes. And this was the case despite their having lower grade point averages in high school.

Though measures of persistence within the College showed only a slight gain for learning community students (77.7 to 75.9 percent), data on intended transfer and continuation indicated that learning community students were significantly more likely to continue in higher education than were comparison class students (88.5 vs. 77.9).

In this regard, it should be noted that such behaviors are one of the intended goals of the programs. Faculty hope to encourage students to reach higher. Indeed, in the qualitative portion of the study, we noted that a number of learning community students spoke of having "raised their sights" during their participation in the programs.

PART FIVE

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: CONSTRUCTING SAFE HAVENS FOR LEARNING

METHODOLOGY

The Research Question

This study began with the assumption that learning communities are an effective way to respond to the academic needs of beginning college students. The rationale for such an assumption was outlined by Bogdan and Taylor when they wrote about investigating positive or optimistic approaches to program implementation (1990). Their rationale was that the question "does a program work?" did little to help practitioners understand how they could implement a similar program and "function[ed] as an exclusionary gatekeeper rather than as an encouraging teacher" (p. 186).

Beginning with the assumption that learning communities "work", we could then go on to ask questions like: How do learning communities work? What do people do in learning communities? and What do learning communities look like? In so doing, we were able to understand, from the students' point of view, how participation in a learning community influenced students' learning experiences and how those learning experiences fit in with their broader experiences as first-year students.

Site Selection

The seminal literature on collaborative learning in higher education contains a small cadre of individuals and institutions that have embraced learning communities over the years. Washington state is home to many such institutions, and as noted elsewhere, supports a national clearinghouse for collaborative learning resources. LaGuardia Community College (LCC) is another institution frequently cited as exemplary in its practice of collaborative learning. Thus, in keeping with our assumption, the third portion of the collaborative learning project of the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (NCTLA) was conducted at LaGuardia Community College, a large urban community

college. This type of institution enrolls a majority of students across the United States and as such was desirable for inclusion in a multi-institution study funded by a national research center. Furthermore, the program is neither new nor marginal to the institution. Indeed, since its founding LaGuardia Community College has had a tradition of innovation, and learning communities have been in place in one form or another. As noted in the prior chapter, most of the faculty have been involved with different aspects of collaborative learning over the past fifteen years. And this is as true for those who taught the comparison classes as it is for those involved in the learning community programs at the time of the study. At the same time, since the learning communities are not new, we were able to avoid the problems typically encountered in the study of new programs and their corresponding "newness" effects.

Learning Community Selection

Because learning communities are so prevalent at LaGuardia, the research team had to choose learning communities on which to focus. Keeping in mind that our two primary goals were: 1) to observe those learning communities that were more likely to use collaborative learning strategies and therefore, we assumed, have a greater impact upon the students, and 2) to come into contact with as diverse a student population as possible, we decided to try to observe a few liberal arts clusters and sections of the New Student House, as well as a few Enterprise pairs. Rather than focusing only on one variety of learning community, we were able to talk with students who had a variety of interests in terms of career choices and interest in transferring, and were at various skill levels. The diverse student population that is characteristic of LCC was evenly distributed throughout courses and programs, so that we did not have to focus on one cluster with a particular theme in order to talk with students of a particular background. For example, there were no learning communities which looked exclusively at the African-American experience, and no learning community attracted a disproportionate number of any one group of students.

Once we decided to look at learning communities in each type of program, we turned to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Roberta Matthews, and the Director of Developmental and Special Programs, Barbara Astone, for their recommendations of specific clusters to observe. They were familiar with the groups of faculty who had taught together previously, who used collaborative learning strategies more often in their classes than others, and therefore were more likely to create an atmosphere that would have a beneficial impact on students.

Not only did these administrators recommend professors and learning communities for us to see, they also acted as gatekeepers. That is, the Director of Developmental and Special Programs provided us with a schedule of days and times for us to observe classes, and she tried to notify professors in advance that a researcher would be in their classrooms. Many professors were surprised by our arrival, and expressed some measure of annoyance or displeasure about not knowing that a researcher was coming. Although no one denied us access, some said things to the effect that they were not prepared to have us there. It should be noted, however, that our experience was reportedly atypical. Given the large number of visitors to the College, faculty are routinely notified well in advance of visits.

Having met with some resistance, we realized the instrumental role the administrators played in getting us in to the learning communities. Because we were there for short visits, we did not have time to develop rapport with faculty, get permission to come to their classes, and then figure out where and when the many different classes met. Instead, Barbara Astone did much of the preparatory work to provide us with access to classes. That served to free the researcher time for talking with students as she met them in classes and around LCC. The researcher talked with Barbara almost every day, sometimes just brief exchanges where she would "check in" to see what might be going on, or to see if her schedule had changed.

Participant Selection

The objective in choosing students to interview was to talk to individuals from a variety of backgrounds. The researcher talked to students whom she sat next to in classes, in small groups in classes, walking between classes, and as she saw them out of classes. Though the researcher is a white woman who looks in the mid-20's, she was hesitant to talk to students at first because she was unsure how they would respond to her. With each positive response, however, she became more comfortable about walking up to a student, introducing herself as a graduate student from Syracuse University, and asking if she could talk to them about LCC. She intentionally selected students who looked to be from a background other than European-American. For example, if she was sitting between two students before a class started, she would choose to talk to a student who did not appear to be European-American. In this way she hoped to consciously broaden her scope of participants.

Data Collection

We visited LaGuardia Community College for three one-week periods in the 1992-93 academic year. The first site visit took place during the second week of the 1992 Fall semester. It allowed us to become familiar with LCC overall. In addition we were able to talk to students at an early point in their experience of learning communities. The second site visit took place during the second to last week of the 1992 Fall semester; the learning communities were ending and the students were able to tell us about their experiences during the semester. The researcher made the third site visit during the middle of the 1993 Spring semester. At that time students were able to reflect upon experiences in and out of learning communities.

Data collection consisted of participant observation, interviews, and document review. Participant observation was conducted in classes, hallways, cafeterias, the library, and in nearby eateries. We stayed approximately 12 miles from the campus and commuted by car, so we saw no students after we left the college at the end of the day. Interviews consisted of informal conversations with students, faculty, and staff; and scheduled open-ended interviews with students. Document review consisted of gathering and/or reviewing and making note of documents about LCC such as the college catalog, course syllabi, course schedules, and material posted around the campus on bulletin boards.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in an on-going process which enabled us to explore themes as they emerged and to pursue unexpected leads during the second and third site visits. The researcher analyzed the data by reading and rereading the fieldnotes and interview transcripts to familiarize herself with them, assigning codes to portions of the data, identifying emerging themes in the data, and generating hypotheses based on these themes. This process of incorporating emerging themes from the data with hypotheses we constructed during the study is characteristic of inductive analysis used in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The strength of inductive analysis is that it facilitates the "grounding" of new models or theories ("grounded theory", Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As noted previously, there has been sparing use of qualitative research in higher education, and its use has been encouraged by researchers (Crowson, 1987; Kuh & Andreas, 1991; Kuh, et al.,1986).

Procedures

Three one-week site visits were made. The first visit took place during the second week of the 1992 Fall semester, the second during the second to last week of the 1992 Fall semester, and the third during the middle of the 1993 Spring semester. Data collection consisted of participant observation in 34 classes, 56 interviews with 47 students, contact with 7 professors (beyond the contact made while observing in classes), 3 informal interviews with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, and daily contact with the Director of Developmental and Special Programs. The researcher was also able to sit in on one meeting of the New Student House faculty. The students interviewed were 27 female and 17 male first-year students, and 3 female second-year students. As far as the researcher could determine without asking the students directly, 17 were of African-American or Caribbean-American backgrounds, 14 Latino/Latina or Hispanic, 10 Western European-American, 2 Eastern European-American, 2 Middle Eastern, and 2 Asian-American.

Before the first site visit

The project director made the initial contact with Roberta Matthews to obtain permission to visit, and to outline the purpose of our visit. He also made a visit to the site to meet with faculty members, answer questions, and solicit support for distribution of the survey portion of the study. The researcher contacted Barbara Astone to establish a schedule of classroom visits.

First Site Visit

During the first site visit, the researcher observed classes from each of the various learning community types--liberal arts cluster, New Student House, and Enterprise. She spent one day with a group from each, moving from class to class with the students and meeting professors as she entered the classes. In this way she was able to see many professors yet stay with a constant group of students, gradually getting to know them and talk with them about their experiences as the day went on. The fourth day of the visit she did not spend with one particular learning community; she observed classes from a number of different learning communities. The researcher introduced herself to the professor of each class (often they would have her introduce herself to the students), sat at the back of the room, and talked to students around her whenever there was a chance. For the most part, her time in class was spent observing and taking notes of the activities. When students formed small groups she would ask to join one and listen to their conversations. She answered questions that were

asked of her. Each evening the researcher dictated field notes of her observations and interactions with students, faculty, and staff.

When she was not in a class, she wandered around inside the college, looking into classrooms, reading bulletin boards, or listening to conversations. One approach to gathering data that the researcher used successfully at other institutions did not work as well at LCC--while sitting in the cafeteria or in a lounge, she realized that she could not understand many nearby conversations because they were not being conducted in English! This thwarted her attempts at eavesdropping, but reinforced the diversity of people present.

We did not rely only on passive means of gathering data outside of classes. The researcher approached a number of students in the cafeterias and lounges and asked them about their experiences. Even those students who were not in a learning community were able to give information about LCC that helped us to understand it from the point of view of a first-year student.

The questions that were uppermost in the researcher's mind during this first visit were very broad and she asked them with the intent of understanding the setting of LCC, becoming familiar with the variety of students there, and finding out what meaning learning communities had for students. For example, she asked some of the following questions: Why did you decide to come to LaGuardia? What do you think of it so far? What classes are you taking? What are they like so far? She also asked students where they lived, how long it took them to get to LaGuardia, and if and where they worked, so that she could get an idea of how being a student fit in with the rest of their days and weeks.

Second Site Visit

The second site visit occurred during the second to last week of the 1992 Fall semester, two weeks before final exams. The researcher was able to observe classes from each of the three learning communities she had spent a day with during the first site visit, and observe classes from two more liberal arts clusters and one more Enterprise pair. She also sat in on a meeting of the New Student House faculty. The researcher spent extended time talking to students in the cafeteria when one class was cancelled, standing in line with students at the Registrar's office, and standing outside one afternoon during a fire alarm. Many other conversations of shorter duration took place before, during, and after classes.

When possible the researcher audio taped her conversations with students. She was able to do so infrequently, because the places where she talked with students were either very noisy or did not lend themselves to placing a tape recorder unobtrusively on a table. When recording, she asked each student for consent to tape the interview, and told them that the information would be used in a research report but that they would not be identified individually in any way. When it was not possible to audio tape the interview, the researcher wrote notes as soon after the interviews as possible, and then dictated full notes that evening. She also continued to write and dictate notes about her observations and interactions with faculty and staff.

During the second site visit the researcher asked students questions about their classes, assignments, professors, peers, and plans for the coming semester. In a manner similar to the first visit, she did not follow a formal interview protocol, but had a range of topics in mind. With no formal protocol, she was able to pursue leads that came up as she was talking to students and observing classes. Some of the questions she asked students were: What is it like being in class with the same people all the time? What are you learning in these classes? What do you do in the Integrated Seminar? What do you usually do in this class? What program are you in? What are your plans for next semester (what classes are you taking)? She also continued to ask students about themselves--where and with whom they lived, how they commuted, if and where they worked.

Third Site Visit

Data collection during the third site visit consisted of observations of two liberal arts clusters and the Cope program, and interviews with students. Some of the students the researcher had talked with in December and wanted to follow up. Barbara Astone provided her with their spring course schedules; she met some outside of their classrooms, and some she happened upon in the hallways and cafeterias. The researcher made arrangements with some to have an extended interview. Those interviews were audio taped. She talked with other students as soon as she saw them and wrote notes later. She also interviewed students whom she had not met before. The students in the Cope program were just beginning at LCC that semester, and she had not seen any of the students in the liberal arts clusters previously.

Her questions during this visit were similar to those she asked during the second visit, especially for the students she had just met. With students she had interviewed in December, she asked them to compare their experiences in learning communities with their current

experiences in classes that were not linked. She also asked if they kept in touch with anyone from their learning community, if they would sign up for a learning community again and why, what their classes were like now, and what they might do to improve LCC.

Analysis

During the site visits we were in contact with at least one other member of the research team daily to debrief and discuss the events of the day. In some cases this was a face to face contact. When other members of the research team were not at LCC, the researcher talked to them on the telephone, discussed ideas or questions to follow up on, checked the assumptions and biases under which we were operating, and encouraged further investigation into areas of interest. These on-site team meetings were important for the continued analysis of the research across the three sites (necessary for the NCTLA), adding detail to the accounts in our fieldnotes, and keeping our energy and enthusiasm levels high. More importantly, interaction among team members forced us to continue probing, to dig deeper, and look beneath the surface of what we were seeing and hearing.

Between site visits the research team met weekly to continue sifting through data and examine themes or working hypotheses that emerged. As the audio tapes of the interviews and field notes were returned from the transcriber, they were reviewed and edited for accuracy. At that time more analytic memos were written, and these provided ideas and topics for our team meetings.

After the three site visits were completed and the transcripts were edited and compiled, the analysis and writing of the report proceeded concurrently, each informing the other. The research team continued to meet and offer feedback on the emerging results, thereby further refining the analysis.

Methodology-Summary

The advantages of using a qualitative method to conduct this part of the study were that it allowed us to gain an understanding of learning communities that was grounded in the broader context of the students' community college experience. The method allowed the researcher to ask a wide range of questions, then focus on more specific areas as she discovered what was important to the students. The on-site observations were instrumental in this aspect as well; the researcher was able to ask questions based on what she saw and try to verify what students were telling her based on their actions.

There were also constraints in carrying out this study. Because of the way classroom observations were scheduled ahead of time (in order to give the professors notice or warning), there were occasions when professors told the researcher that they had prepared a collaborative learning exercise since they knew she would be there. Although she attempted to reassure them that she was not evaluating their performance and only wanted to see what a usual class looked like, some continued to be apologetic if they did not have students "do group work" while she was there.

Another constraint was the limitation on funding which influenced the number site visits and their duration. The researcher was unable to become an accepted, established fixture in classes, so it was likely that the novelty of her visits influenced the interactions she had with students in some way. This is not to say that the students were unfriendly, or that she had a hard time getting into places on campus. What it does mean, however, is that the researcher was not as privy to some of the students' thoughts and feelings as she might have been if she were able to have developed longer-term relationships with them.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: CONSTRUCTING SAFE HAVENS FOR LEARNING

The value of conducting a qualitative case study is that it provides considerable detail about the context of the study and about the study itself. Accordingly, the results of a qualitative study of student learning experiences include details about the time spent in and out of class, and descriptions of the environment in which the study takes place.

In reporting the findings of this part of our study, we will begin by describing the diversity of students that were found at LaGuardia Community College. It is important that this discussion is placed here because these are findings not only about the college but also about the character of student experience at the college. At the same time, the diversity of students serves as a context for understanding other comments students made about their experience and the things that we observed about learning communities.

Following the contextual description of diversity is a section on students forming groups. The second major finding of the study relates to the ways in which students formed groups in and out of learning communities. Students formed groups in classes in a variety of ways. Many groups were maintained outside of class once they had been established in classes. Though this may sound elementary, it is a central aspect of the study. The fact that students were able to form and maintain groups on their own allowed them to do other things in and out of classes that they might not have been able to do had they not been in learning communities and been able to form groups of peers.

The third theme of the findings was that students in learning communities reported high levels of social and academic support, which reinforced each other and contributed to student satisfaction, involvement in classes, and students' belief that they would stay in college. Examples of each of these outcomes are given.

Finally, the fourth theme relates to the structure of learning communities and how students benefited from a consistent structure. Learning communities allowed students to form peer groups as well as other things that they would not have done if they were not in three classes with the same group of students, each meeting with the same group of professors.

Cultural Diversity at LaGuardia Community College

LaGuardia Community College is an environment rich in cultural diversity. The fact that it is located in New York City makes this highly likely, though not all branches of the CUNY system are as diverse as LaGuardia. Indeed, the diversity of the student population could be considered the hallmark of LCC. The college catalog proclaims diversity as a value, stating: "As LaGuardia moves into its third decade, it will continue to reaffirm its critical role to provide access to higher education and meaningful employment for the City's historically under-served populations: the poor, ethnic minorities, women, the disabled and recent immigrants. By continuing to celebrate diversity throughout the college community and sharpening the focus for economic development, our institution will forge new paths of educational opportunity for all students who come to LaGuardia." (1993 catalog, p. 3). Students, too, clearly stated that the diversity of students is one reason that they chose to come to LaGuardia Community College. One woman put it this way:

Student: I had other choices between other schools, the reason I came was for cultural purposes.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Student: Look around, you see people from any country! You see it here, and you can see their background. [At another college in the City you will] maybe see black, white, that's it, and Chinese. . . . You're just gonna see those three groups. But. . . like in our class we got people from Pakistan, Peru, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Africa, I mean, anywhere you name we have the people.

Diversity of students

To give an idea of what diversity of the student population means at LaGuardia Community College, we present some portraits of first-year students we met.

T. graduated from high school four years ago, got a job as a medical assistant, became pregnant, married, and left her job. She went back to work as a medical assistant, and got two certificates for classes she took, but she wanted to be able to do something more. She also was looking for a job that would pay more than $10 per hour and had some possibility of advancement, so she came to LaGuardia to be a teacher. T. wondered how her getting a college degree would affect her marriage since her husband did not have a degree; she hoped he would go back to college too. By the middle of November, she had stopped coming to classes.

A. moved from Pakistan eight months before enrolling at LCC. His many brothers had lived in the U.S. for 9 or 10 years and had a contracting business, so A. was able to move to the U.S. on a family visa. He moved to New York, began working with his brothers, spoke two native Pakistani languages and two other languages but did not know English. He learned enough English by talking to street people to pass the English as a Second Language test at LCC, but not enough to advance him beyond developmental level courses. A. was not working while he was taking classes so that he could concentrate on his studies. He hoped to get an MBA and move back to

Pakistan.[1]

C. grew up in Georgia. Her mother had her when she was 14, her father left her mother shortly after she was born. Her father spoke Spanish, but her mother was African-American, so she was raised in an African culture. She moved to New York City by herself at age 16, lived in a boarding house, and was a dancer at a strip club to support herself. When we met she was 24, and on public assistance. She had no children. C. was an accounting and business major.

G. and his parents lived in a Greek neighborhood in Queens. He went to a high school with mostly Italian and Greek students, and was surprised that he got along with so many people of different backgrounds. His parents wanted him to meet and date Greek women. G. worked at a shoe store four days a week. He was a liberal arts major, and was planning to transfer to a SUNY campus after one year at LCC.

M. moved from the Dominican Republic with her parents and four sisters five years ago. Each of her parents had been to first grade; her father was a carpenter, but had a hard time finding work because he spoke Spanish. When we met M. was 19, the oldest of the five girls; her 18 year old sister was going to Hunter College. M. said that she wanted to transfer there when she graduated from LCC. She wanted to be a teacher or work with kids in some capacity.

R. moved from Peru with his father, mother, and older brother a year and a half ago. He did not speak English, but learned some through school and work. R. said he did not speak English at home because his parents did not speak it, and in his neighborhood if he tried to speak English people would think that he didn't like Spanish, or that he was too good for them. He liked listening to a Spanish radio station and going out to night clubs where there was Spanish music and people spoke Spanish. He was having a hard time getting his school assignments done because he worked, and because it took him a long time to read and write in English.

---

[1] It is unclear whether A used the term "street people" to refer to people she met on the street or to that group of typically homeless people to whom that term is more commonly applied.

What we found most striking about students at LaGuardia Community College was the number of ways in which they differed, and the range of experiences within single "categories" of diversity. The six portraits above illustrate some of the characteristics along which students differed: ethnicity, gender, employment, and family status.

Students also differed according to age, sexual orientation, language spoken at home, how many languages the student spoke, class status, religion, where students lived/commuting distance, family education levels, and career aspirations or degree aspirations. To list these factors as we have can be overwhelming, and serve to blur the intricate nature of the many possible variations and permutations. Therefore, to continue to set the context of students' experiences at LCC, it is important to take the time to absorb the complexity that eventually is accepted as the norm by everyone at the college.

Ethnic diversity among students was the most visible type of diversity most visible to me, and was the primary factor that students mentioned when they referred to the mixture of people at LCC. Walking through the halls we could not help but notice the multitude of cultures represented. While European-American and African-American students were quite visible, Hispanic/Latino students were even more so. Official figures from LaGuardia confirm this; Hispanic/Latino students represent the largest percentage of students at the college. Middle Eastern-American and Asian-American students were also visible. However, to imply that all students were recognizable as coming from a single ethnic background would be wrong; many students, like C., were of mixed-ethnic backgrounds. To further confound easy categorization, many students were recent immigrants and some were international students.

Students at LaGuardia Community College differed according to age, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, although these characteristics were mentioned rarely by students. The students in the learning communities we observed were, for the most part, full-time day students. They were also, for the most part, in their early 20's. Had we been observing evening classes we probably would have seen more older students. Women outnumbered men in most classes. Sexual orientation was never brought up by the students or by the researcher. There were, however, flyers around campus advertising meetings of the Gay and Lesbian Student Union. Finally, the religious beliefs of students came up in class discussions, or in conversations related to course topics. One student explained that women in orthodox sects of his faith, Judaism, shaved their heads after marriage; he related this to the story they were reading at the time about rites of passage for women. Another student told the researcher that he had refused to read an article for his philosophy class because the

author, Sartre, argued that there was no such thing as God; the student considered that blasphemy and therefore reading it was against his religious values.

Family status, class status, and employment were other related factors that influenced each other and along which students differed. By family status, we mean whether students were married or single (never married, separated, or divorced), living with their parents or not, had children or not, or any combination. Family status and class status were related to employment because they dictated, to some extent, how much students had to work. Overall, faculty members were concerned that students worked too much. Students who worked full-time to support parents or children had little time to complete assignments or reading; some fell asleep in class on a regular basis. Other students had families that did not want them to work so that they could put all their efforts into studying; some students did so but others felt uncomfortable about being supported by their parents now that they were in college. Still other students did not work outside the home, but had responsibility for child care. Long hours of employment were complicated by students' need to be registered as full-time students so that they qualified for financial aid. It was not a matter of cutting back on the number of courses taken so that students could get enough sleep or earn enough money. In many cases, they needed to work *and* they needed to take a full course schedule.

Another noticeable difference among students was language. It was noticeable when students greeted each other in different languages and when they spoke English with accents. In one class of 20 students, 10 raised their hands when the professor asked who had learned English as a second language. Some students had a hard time speaking and writing English, either because they had not had a good education in the U.S., or because it was their second or third language, or because their parents did not speak it at home, or any combination thereof. Students' fluency in English influenced how long it took them to read and write, which in turn affected how much professors could expect to do in a class period and how much homework they could expect students to complete. Although students had to complete a reading comprehension placement test before being assigned to classes, in the Fall of 1992 the time limit for the reading test had been challenged. Extra time had been allotted, and students' scores went up. This had not been taken into account when placing students, so professors and academic counselors were noticing many students who were struggling in their classes, and perhaps should have been placed at a lower level.

Finally, although LCC is located in western Queens, many students live in other New York City boroughs and travel great distances to reach the college. Those students who lived in Queens or Brooklyn had train rides of only 20-40 minutes. Others who lived in the Bronx, Manhattan, or Staten Island had considerably longer commutes--one man from the Bronx had a nearly two hour commute home in the late afternoon because it was rush hour when his class got out. Most took public transportation. Some drove, and that meant that they had to arrive before 8 a.m. in order to find a place to park on the street. The time that it took students to travel was important because students were unwilling to come to LaGuardia for one or two classes in the morning and additional classes in the afternoon. Desirable class schedules were those that allowed students to take their courses in a row, with no breaks in between, so that they then had another concentrated block of time during the day when they could work. That fact that LCC attracted students from all over NYC added to the ethnic, religious, and class mixture of the students. It was not a regional college in the sense that it only attracted students from its surrounding neighborhoods. It was a cosmopolitan college, drawing on all the resources the City offered.

Diversity of faculty

Until this point, we have not made reference to the composition of the faculty at LaGuardia Community College. It is important to note, however, as it serves to round out the picture of LCC. A majority of faculty were European-American. Of the 17 professors we observed in classes, 9 were men, 8 were women; 13 were European-American, 3 African-American, and 1 was Hispanic. One European-American professor told the researcher that he was a member of the Gay and Lesbian Faculty Association.

These aspects of faculty diversity influenced students' experiences in class. Faculty members with diverse experiences were able to broaden the context of the course content for students, and this may have served to make students feel more accepted and welcome in the classroom. For example, the Hispanic professor greeted his students in Spanish, and later on in the class translated a Spanish phrase for students. The students were having difficulty putting their words into English and he was able to point out that a direct translation into English did not fit. As soon as he pointed that out, the students gave a mutual "Ah-hah!" and went on with their writing.

This section on the diversity of student and faculty characteristics leads to three important points:

The first is the appreciation that students at LaGuardia Community College had of the fact that LaGuardia is a place where many different types of people gathered. Students looked around, saw that people were getting along together and learning about each other. They appreciated that all the more because of the larger picture that we need to keep in mind about LaGuardia--namely, that LCC is in New York City, a large metropolitan city that has a very recent history of many incidents of racial tension. LaGuardia is a haven in many ways; a stopping off point not only from the hectic pace, the noise, and the threatening environment of the city, but it is also a place where people can get along and learn from each other.

The second important point that bears comment is that the faculty at LaGuardia taught classes that were incredibly diverse. Even in a class of 20 or 25 students, faculty had students who were working full-time, who had children, who were supporting their parents, who were just learning English, were proficient in English, who had a wide variety of life experiences or had a very narrow scope of life experiences. Fo a faculty member to be able to connect with all these students was a tremendous challenge. Even in the classes where professors were using minimal amounts of collaborative learning strategies, or perhaps not using groups to their fullest potential, we had to remind ourselves that if these professors were at another institution they would not have the kind of challenges that they were facing at LCC. In reading through the rest of the report it is important to remember how students from such a variety of backgrounds would look in one classroom, and how faculty members coped and adapted their techniques to deal with their classrooms on a daily basis. Having said that, it is not as if these faculty members were boasting of their heroism or complaining that they had it bad. They spoke well of the students and they were energized by the students.

The third point to remember against this backdrop of incredible diversity is that after a while at LCC it seemed as if that was the norm; it was seen as normal that there were many different kinds of people with many different needs. Indeed, LCC traditionally has served such a wide range of students that it is not unusual for faculty to continue to do so. It may be easy to slip into the feeling that what happens at LCC is not unusual, but if we step back and look at it in the context of NYC, and the other institutions in the city, both the CUNY and private institutions, and then step back even further and look at it on the national level, the kinds of interactions that happen at LaGuardia are unique and very special.

Students in Learning Communities formed Groups

This section of findings is about the ways in which students in learning communities formed groups. It includes descriptions of the ways that students formed groups in class, and ways that students maintained groups outside of class. Throughout this section the examples of groups continue to reflect the diversity of people and experiences at LCC, and the ways that students shared their different experiences. This took place not only informally out-of-class, but also in class. In these ways, students were able to explore the diversity that is a part and parcel of LCC.

Before continuing with this section, however, it is important to describe how we are defining groups. When we say that students in learning communities formed groups, we are referring to formal and informal groups, both those that professors constructed in the classroom and those that students constructed in the classroom. Professors put students together in small groups for the duration of reading a novel, for example, or small groups met consistently over time and therefore took to sitting together in classes even when they were not formally working in their group. We are also referring to the variety of ways that students formed connections with each other, whether they walked to and from classes together, or knew each other from before (some had siblings, cousins, or friends who were at LCC). We are also referring to different levels of interaction. Some student groups were very casual, like the students who spent time together in the breaks between classes. Other groups were more intensive, based around class projects. In thinking about these findings, we were first tempted to use the word "community", but its connotation of a formal, intentional, regular gathering of people with similar values and goals was not the only image that we wanted to conjure up. Instead, we decided to use the word groups because it was more fluid, implied less structure, and had a broader connotation.

Students formed groups in class

Students formed groups in class in various ways. The clustering of classes that was a key ingredient of learning communities allowed students to see each other in three or four classes per day, four days a week. Furthermore, within those classes professors used small groups of students to work on assignments, review readings, or discuss questions. Finally, bringing personal experiences into class was another way that students got to know each other and became comfortable in their groups.

Clusters of classes in learning communities

The fact that groups of 20-30 students were placed together in three or four classes meant that they spent a lot of time together. As they got to know each other, they made acquaintances and friends, and came to enjoy the small class sizes and concentrated courses. Students in an Enterprise math/computer pair became friends with others in class and always sat together; they could help each other out when they had questions. A woman in the New Student House talked about the benefits of small class sizes. She said, "the small classroom is wonderful, because there's a lot of colleges here in New York City where you might get 100 students in the class. You're just sitting in the lecture hall. The teacher don't know you from A, B, C, so, [at LCC] you have the personal attention. That's what counts".

Another woman talked about the small size of classes *and* the fact that they were linked together: "It's easier that way [in a cluster]. If they have it separate, most people would just stop coming to class, because it will be hard for them if they have so many students in one class and you can't really learn anything". Her comments reflect the role of her peers in going to classes--if she was in separate, larger classes she thought it would be hard to make herself go to class and to learn.

The use of small groups in learning communities

The New Student House reading class had small groups that usually worked together. When the researcher arrived in class, some students were sitting together, and they explained to me that they were members of the same group. That day the professor divided them into different groups so everyone got up and moved around, but the students had a few minutes at the beginning of class to greet each other and talk about the reading for the day. Ricardo told the researcher that his group liked to get to class early so that they could sit together; through the consistent meeting of the small group they had become friends.

In a liberal arts cluster three Asian woman and one woman from the Dominican Republic were working together in a small group. Each had weak English skills, but were supportive of each other, patiently listening to what the others were trying to say. As the researcher talked with them, they told her that they liked being in their small group because they could assist each other and learn from each other. However, they were frustrated because they weren't getting support from anyone else in class. Other students would laugh at them when they mispronounced words or hesitated over words, and so they didn't feel good in that class.

The experience of these women illustrates some of the positives and negatives of small groups. Within the small group, they were able to support each other, focusing on the skills they needed to improve. What they missed out on, however, was the expertise that someone who spoke English as a first language could have provided. Researchers in the field of cooperative and collaborative learning recommend the use of heterogeneous group for just that purpose--members of the group can benefit from the strengths of the others, and one group does not outdistance the others because of its surplus of talent (Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., & Smith, K.A., 1991).

A woman in the New Student House was enthusiastic about her experience in small groups. She talked about how they allowed everyone to participate in class discussions. In the small groups, everybody was able to say what they thought about a question or issue, discuss what other people thought about it, and have everyone give their interpretation. She reported that she was able to learn from the people in her group and help them out as well. For her, the small groups were a way to get beyond just meeting people in class; they were a vehicle for classroom conversation.

Bringing personal experiences into class enhanced group formation

A third way that students formed groups in class was by bringing personal experiences into class. That is, as students began to know more about each other they formed groups along common interests or experiences. In one class, students who were working on similar topics for their term papers were placed into groups so that they could share resources and genuinely be interested in what the other members of the group were writing about. In one New Student House class, the first assignment was for pairs of students to interview each other, then introduce each other to the rest of the class. The professor suggested that they ask each other about their interests, the kind of work they wanted to do, what they did before they came to LCC, etc. They had to end their introduction with three reasons why they thought that person was unique.

Another example of a group of students sharing a common interest was a group in a liberal arts cluster reflecting on a panel discussion about violence toward gays and lesbians that they had seen the day before. When the professor came over to the group to see how they were doing on that day's assignment, they said "Oh no, we're supposed to be talking about our class assignment." She said, "No, no. What's up? What are you guys talking about?" They told her, and she talked with them for a minute about the reactions of some of the students in the audience. It was a great example of students and a professor reflecting

together on something the students had seen, and taking time out from the "official" assignment of the day to do so. By paying attention to the experiences of the students, the professor was able to learn how they felt and what they were thinking about regarding an assignment for another class in the cluster. She also was able to reinforce that the students' processing of their experiences as a group was worthwhile.

Not all students were eager to share their experiences or wanted to hear personal experiences of the professor. Some students sounded as if they would be more comfortable in traditional classes, where the professor gave information and students recorded it. For example, Ramon didn't like it when personal stories (on the part of students and faculty) became the main focus in the classroom; he said he was in class to hear what the professor had to tell the students about the content. Ramon tended to sit at the edges of the classrooms, and when the researcher talked with him at length he was sitting by himself in the cafeteria. He gave the clear impression that he was not at LCC to meet people or to look for social support. A student in another cluster told the researcher that many cliques that had formed in the classes, and that not all students fit in or felt comfortable about that. She had become friends with a man in the class, but he didn't hang out with anyone between classes or go to the off-campus party that they had. She, on the other hand, obviously enjoyed the camaraderie that had developed among some of the students--they were chatting about weekend plans and wishing a student a happy birthday.

More students talked positively rather than negatively about the close interactions between students, and between students and faculty. Students enjoyed the attention that professors gave them, and valued the attempts that professors made to get to know them. One woman in the New Student House, for example, described how a professor paid attention to them: "He knows everybody. He knows if you're not feeling well that day. You having a problem, he's gonna say, 'Excuse me, what's your problem? You're not feeling okay? You're tired? Stay after class, we gotta talk.'" Rather than viewing this as a distraction of the classroom or a diversion from the main mission of the class, as Ramon did, this student was pleased.

Students maintained groups outside of class

Students not only formed groups in their learning community classes, they actively maintained them outside of classes. Students spent time together informally before and after classes, they took advantage of more formal opportunities created within LCC to form

groups, and they socialized outside of LCC. The amount of time that students spent in peer groups emphasizes the importance of peers and social support, especially when considered in light of the many competing obligations students had for their time. In spite of work schedules and time needed to study, students spent time with each other socializing outside of classes. One student said she thought that indicated that the students at LaGuardia were not serious about their studies. The students with whom the researcher spoke sounded as if they were cementing their connections to LCC by spending time socializing with their learning community peers. By having a peer group at college they felt as if they belonged there; it was not necessarily an indication of a lack of commitment to their courses.

Spending time together between classes

During the second week of classes Tia told the researcher that the Enterprise business/computer pair was supposed to help students feel more comfortable, because it contained the same students and professors. For her it was working because she had gotten to know people as they walked between classes together. When the researcher talked with another woman during the Spring semester she described how she met people outside of classes because people were so friendly. She saw people she was in class with, or students from the Fall semester's New Student House, and they would stop and talk. For example, she knew the class schedules of some other New Student House students, and they kept in touch with each other by meeting up before or after classes.

The many groups of students that could be found in cafeterias, lounges, and hallways between classes contributed to the high levels of noise and animation around the campus. Occasionally, a class would be cancelled, and when this happened students gathered in small groups in the cafeterias or at nearby fast food restaurants. These unplanned breaks between classes offered students an opportunity to relax together and continue to form interpersonal relationships outside of the classroom setting.

One group of students in the New Student House independently took this out of class socializing to an unusual extent. They planned a birthday party for one of the students and invited the professors too. It was held in a classroom during the day; someone brought a cake, another person brought music, and people danced.

Spending time together outside of classes

Formal opportunities for students to form groups outside of class were provided through LCCs many student organizations. Although these were not related to learning communities, students in learning communities were becoming active in the life of LaGuardia through the various student organizations. LCC recognized student organizations in general, such as the drama club, student government, honor society, and interest groups. There also were student organizations within ethnic groups. A partial list includes: ("student association" or "student organization" is part of their names)--African Peoples, Jewish, Indian, European, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Indonesian, Thai, Lebanese, Palestinian, Laotian, Egyptian. In addition, there were student organizations recognizing other cultural differences such as the Gay and Lesbian Student Union, and a Disabled Student group.

A student group organized across ethnic groups was being established in the Spring of 1993. United We Stand (UWS) had been formed just five weeks previous to my last visit. They had just gotten a constitution so that they were recognized as a student organization by LCC. There were about 20 students at the meeting the researcher attended, mostly men (four or five women), who looked like they were from a variety of backgrounds. Gaston, the group's President, was from Argentina, and he described the group this way:

> We're trying to be a club for all students, across all racial and religious lines and everything else. You can notice that there are clubs for every different group, but we want to be a club for all students, and we want to show LaGuardia that we want LaGuardia Community College to stand out as being a place where everyone can work together and be unified.

At the meeting they planned an international dinner which was that night at Gaston's apartment. People were bringing dishes from their countries. For the next week they planned a scavenger hunt of LCC. Other activities they wanted to organize (per their flyer posted around the college) included camp outings, summer picnics, and life talks (where people would talk about life in their country.)

Finally, three or four students in one of the clusters went to a party together on the weekend. They didn't know each other before they came to LCC, and they met through the cluster. They were passing notes to each other about the party during one class, and talking a little more about it in their small groups in another class. This demonstrated the impact that spending much time together in classes had on students. That is, they were able to

communicate with each other and organize a party off-campus. For those students, this reinforced a sense of connection when students saw each other again in class.

This section of findings illustrates the many ways in which students in learning communities formed groups in and out of class. Although the in-class groups may seem to be more directly related to the aim of learning communities, out-of-class groups served to solidify social ties that were begun in the classroom. Furthermore, the times spent together out of class were only possible because of the way in which learning communities were constructed--that students went to the same classes together and therefore had the same schedules. Students had the same breaks, and the same cancelled classes, and they continued to congregate in small groups.

Beyond the information about students forming groups, the examples throughout this section demonstrate the variety of ways that people with diverse backgrounds interacted. Such interactions were not limited to the classroom setting; they overflowed out into the informal interactions students engaged in between classes. One group of students in a liberal arts cluster was composed of two African-American men, one Spanish man, two African-American women, one Asian-American woman, and one European-American woman. One day they alternated between talking about their assignment and talking about the opening of the movie "Malcolm X". Some students had read the book, and some had seen clips of the movie, and they talked about his religion, his beliefs, and how his beliefs had changed after his journey to Mecca. The conversation had little to do with the class assignment, but it was apparent to me that the students had been talking about this before, and were sharing what they knew with each other. Examples of this kind of informal learning, brought about by student groups, abounded in learning communities.

One student gave a more personal example of the way that interacting with a variety of people in the groups in his liberal arts cluster had influenced him:

> That's why the cluster is really great, cuz right now [September] I've made a lot of friends. Which in another school if I had different classmates, it would have been harder. I've made a lot of friends that I didn't know before, so that's good. See, and the thing is, nobody in there is Greek. So, as you know, people when they're being brought up, the parents tend to have them stick with their own . . . . So really it's very interesting. There's not a Greek person here, and I'm still getting along with people.

Social and Academic Support in Learning Communities

While the previous two sections of findings, cultural diversity at LaGuardia Community College, and students in learning communities forming groups, describe what learning communities looked like and the environment in which they operated, in this section we turn to what some might consider the meat of the matter--what difference do learning communities make? Within the context of a diverse student body, a somewhat diverse faculty body, and the proclivity of students to form groups in and out of their learning communities, what effects do learning communities have on students? Or, more appropriately, given the qualitative nature of this part of the study, what meaning do students make of learning communities?

Although we asked few students any of these questions directly, their answers to our general questions about learning communities and my classroom observations provided me with rich data. From the data, the theme of social and academic support became evident. Students in learning communities reported high levels of social and academic support, but that was not all. Social and academic support reinforced each other and contributed to student satisfaction, involvement in classes, and students' belief that they would succeed. This section of the findings elaborates on these interrelated themes.

Students reported high levels of social support

One of the most frequently mentioned aspects of learning communities, especially during the Fall semester, was that they allowed students to get to know a consistent group of peers. New students at LCC were impressed and intimidated by its size, both in terms of buildings and people. Even students who had gone to large high schools reported that they felt different at LaGuardia, and it took them a while to feel as if they belonged there and knew their way around. In spite of the large number of students, this student talked about not feeling alone: "at first it was great [to be in New Student House] because we didn't get lost. . . . Now we're friends". Learning communities made being in college less scary than students thought it might be.

Students' comfort at being at LCC in general was related to their comfort in classes. The fact that learning communities provided a known, consistent, group of peers helped students' feelings of anxiety in the classroom. Ahmad explained the relationship between making friends in classes and being able to discuss class topics:

> . . . In the same class you see all the time the same faces, and you make friends. And you discuss anything whenever you want. . . . If I have a class, like writing, and the next class is different, then I have to make friends in that class, and I can't discuss the things that I want. [In the New Student House] it's easier to talk about different ideas or whatever you want.

Ahmad went on to talk about how being in the New Student House reduced his anxiety about talking to new people, especially women. He told me that if he was friends with them from classes, then he could talk to women without worrying if they wanted to talk to him or not. He had already gotten to know them in class.

One woman expressed the social desirability of being in class, even though she was not doing well academically. In the course of our conversation she said, "I'm flunking anyway, so I don't even know why I'm here." I said, "Why are you here?" and she replied, "Well, I don't have anywhere else to go, and it's comfortable here. It's nice, I like it here." She did not want to leave the class, because to do so would mean leaving her peer group, but she was not going to put any effort into it since she was flunking the class already. In her case the social support she felt from her peers was enough to keep her coming to class; unfortunately, it was not enough to engage her in the content of the class.

Students reported high levels of academic support

In addition to reporting high levels of social support, students reported high levels of academic support. Peers were instrumental in providing academic support, and it was evident in many of the interactions professors had with students.

Peers provided academic support

Many students alluded to the fact that, because of learning communities, their peers were always around them and always available to answer questions or offer help. When the researcher asked Ellen about the Enterprise business/computer pair she was in, she replied:

> I think it works just great. Because you can ask your classmates. They know many things that you don't know. . . . Or you can work on both things, if you have any questions about business or computers you can ask them about both things. . . . Actually, for this test, the business test, I studied with a

> classmate, and I did much better this time. I haven't thought about working in groups or something like that because my English is so, I'm afraid of talking to people sometimes. I'm afraid. But this person speaks Spanish, but he speaks English better than he speaks Spanish. So he was talking to me in English, and I was talking to him in Spanish. And it works, it works much more better.

Other students told the researcher that they studied with the same friends they hung out with, and that they could help each other out in class because they always sat together.

Students who had a class in a computer lab had another kind of opportunity to help each other. Whereas in a traditional class students might be limited to helping those they sat next to, students in the computer lab were moving from computer to computer, asking questions and helping each other out. Questions ranged from ideas for an essay to how to choose fonts on the computer.

As noted earlier, many students talked about getting help from their peers. The social support that they were able to build as a result of being in a learning community translated into academic support. The opposite may have been true, also. That is, students in learning communities had many opportunities to provide academic support for each other, and that may have contributed to higher levels of social support. In Ellen's case, she knew her classmate well enough to know that he spoke English and Spanish. That gave her some incentive to ask for help studying, which she found to be a positive experience. It is possible to speculate that as they helped each other study they learned more about each other, thereby reinforcing their levels of social interaction.

Faculty members provided academic support

Faculty members in learning communities provided academic support for students in a variety of ways. In some learning communities, the ways the professors ran their classes complemented each other. In other learning communities, faculty and staff met on a regular basis to coordinate their efforts and share notes on the progress of various students. Other learning communities, by focusing on cross-cultural topics, were able to reinforce the variety of experiences students brought with them to class. Examples of the ways that professors in learning communities provided academic support are given below.

Professor C. primarily lectured, but students recommended that the researcher see his class because they loved his style. Indeed, he was a dynamic speaker who moved around the room, varied the pitch and volume of his voice, and constantly asked students questions. In one class, at three or four separate times, he encouraged the students to take seriously what they were studying, because no one else was going to be doing it from their particular point of view. He spoke to one African-American man, who was looking tired and bored. He said,

> I'm gonna wake you up whether you like it or not. Look at you. You're slumped, you're sitting in the back, you're not taking any notes. You're not learning this stuff. How are you gonna be able to go out into the community and talk to people about this stuff? . . . Do you think [President] Bush is studying the LA riots? No! Do you think the people at Yale are studying the LA riots? Not like you are! It's up to you.

Later he said that he was going to send their papers to the White House because President-elect Clinton would need to know that they were thinking about the riots, and had some answers for him. Not only did Professor C. support his students by showing them how important he thought their ideas were, he emphasized the cultural perspective of the content. He tried to make them feel like important students, and he emphasized that they were important Hispanic and African-American and lower income students.

Professor C. also encouraged his students to answer his questions. Although many professors asked questions of students during classes, few waited long enough for answers. He would ask a question of a specific person (using that person's name), then wait for an answer. If no answer was forthcoming, he would ask another student. When he got an answer that he liked, he would praise the student, saying "Beautiful! Very good! Oh, I love it, I love it. Beautiful!"

Even though Professor C. was directing the discussion, he focused on the positive responses and did not dwell on those students who did not have an answer. The student reported that the class I observed was typical of all his classes, and they liked him very much. It should be noted here that although C. rarely used a small group format in his class, his learning community colleagues often did. Students in this learning community were exposed to a variety of teaching styles, thereby increasing the chances that they would find a style that was compatible with their own styles of learning.

Another way that faculty provided academic support was by focusing on cross-cultural topics, or content from diverse cultural perspectives. In this way professors supported the experiences of students who might not have been supported in classes that centered around European-American content. Professor F. talked about the importance of centering the course content around the experiences of diverse people. She pointed out that if most of a course was spent on the contributions of European-American men, and then some time at the end was spent on the contributions of women and people of color, students would get the message that the contributions of women and minorities were not as important as those of European-American men. For example, she told me that the men in class squirmed when they had to read the story, "Annie John", which was about a girl's first menstruation. When the men complained, she asked them how they thought women felt when movies and books glorified a boy's getting laid for the first time. The men responded that women have their first lay, but Professor F. pointed out that it was different; the nature of the experience for men and women was different, and that was one of the things she hoped they were learning. While the experience of reading that particular book was disquieting for the men, it was confirming for the women, who were given the opportunity to look at their own experiences and compare them to a model that fit the nature of their experiences.

Faculty, and in some cases staff, provided academic support to students through meetings of the learning community teams. For example, the New Student House coordinator (who was a faculty member), the counselor, and the three classroom professors met weekly to coordinate topics and share information. Before registration for the Spring semester began they spent two long meetings talking about each student so that the counselor could have their collective evaluation of each student, and therefore better advise them. Although the students might not have been aware of these efforts, their advisor was very well informed of their skill levels and areas of interest. If he had to advise the 75 students without input from the faculty members, he would have had much less--and perhaps less accurate--information. Not all faculty teams met on a regular basis or even talked on a regular basis, but those that did were able to pool their information about students and provide greater support to those students who needed it.

Faculty in learning communities supported students academically by coordinating course topics, often across cultural perspectives; by knowing enough about each student to be able to advise them and to be able to involve them in classes; and by complimenting each others' strengths and weaknesses. Professor C's fellow learning community professors were not such dynamic lecturers, but they used small groups well. Professor F's fellow learning community professors might not have been as familiar as she was with feminist literature and

theory, but they could contribute other perspectives. In learning communities, collaborative learning referred as much to the professors as to the students. Faculty members who collaborated with each other were able to offer students academic support that went beyond a single classroom.

High levels of social and academic support in learning communities contributed to students satisfaction

As we talked to students during our second and third site visits, it was evident that students were very satisfied with their experiences in learning communities. The reasons why they were so satisfied became apparent to students when they no longer were in a learning community. Kim reflected on the differences between being in a liberal arts cluster in the Fall and being in discrete classes in the Spring. She talked about the combination of social and academic support that were possible in the learning community:

> In the cluster we knew each other, we were friends, we discussed everything from all the classes. We knew things very, very well because we discussed it all so much. We had a discussion about everything. Now it's more difficult because there are different people in each class. There's not so much - oh, I don't know how to say it. It's not so much togetherness. In the cluster if we needed help or if we had questions, we could help each other. . . . Now we're just, more on our own.

Kim struggled to tell the researcher these things about her experiences in and out of learning communities. She used the words "alone", "on our own", and "not so much togetherness" more than once, trying to describe for her how she was feeling now that she was not in a cluster.

Similarly, Rachael, who had been in the New Student House in the Fall, said of that experience that the students were friendly with each other, all knew each other, and were all together. Comparing that with her experience in the Spring, she said, "I'm all alone, everyone is on their own, in all our classes". The researcher asked her what she would do if she could change something about LCC and she replied, "I would have the New Student House all through my program, all two years; make it so all the same people went through all the courses together."

Clearly, these students and others valued the social support they received from their peers in learning communities. In addition, the social support was tied closely with academic support, in that students turned to each other for help. Student satisfaction was expressed in other ways, as well, as the following sections about student involvement and student confidence in their own success demonstrate.

Students in learning communities were involved in classes

Classes in learning communities were lively. Students often were placed in small groups and given questions to discuss, or professors led discussions with the entire class. In some cases a small number of students dominated the discussions, but in general students had the opportunity to express their views. Two themes emerged from the data that were focused on student involvement in class. First, students said it was easier to participate in classes in learning communities because they knew everyone. Second, students got involved by bringing their personal experiences into class. These two themes are explored below.

"It's easier to participate in class because I know everyone."

When George was asked what difference being in a liberal arts cluster had made for him. He replied:

> It has made it easier for me to do my oral presentations for the oral communication course. Because these people know me and I know them, you know what I mean? If it was a different class, it would have been different, cuz you don't know them too well . . . in one class. But this is a cluster and everybody knows each other. I know everybody very well now. So I wasn't nervous at all, so that's how it helps.

Students in one small group explained why they had to take turns being reporters and recorders for their groups. They were teasing one woman in the group because she was shy and did not like to speak in class, but they said she had to because that was how the groups were set up. Ideally, this kind of structure would have allowed each person to speak for the group on a rotating basis, although the day the researcher was there the woman refused to be the reporter. Instead she took notes and one of the men in the group gave a report to the rest of the class.

The example of a shy woman in another liberal arts cluster demonstrates the role of social support in student involvement. The class the researcher observed was rowdy, with students laughing, joking, and being boisterous in general. The professor asked a woman to get up in front of the class and read the fairy tale that her group had written. As soon as she stood, the class got very quiet, and each student listened intently. She spoke quietly, but everyone could hear. The students in this class knew which students could take some heckling and which would be intimidated, and their silence helped her to be involved.

Students got involved by bringing their personal experiences into class

When professors in learning communities asked students to contribute to discussions, they frequently asked students for examples from their own lives. Professors also gave students assignments that were activity oriented, and then asked students to write essays based on those experiences. In these and other ways, students were encouraged to become involved in classes. The sharing of personal experiences with peers reinforced the social ties that students were establishing, and perhaps allowed students to become familiar enough with each other so that they could ask each other for academic support as well.

One English professor noticed that her students were having a hard time writing dialogue in their stories. She spent a class period asking students to role-play in front of the others, so that they could get a feel for what real dialogue sounded like. Afterwards students had some experiences upon which to base their writing, and their stories improved.

Other professors assigned some sort of activity to students, then used those experiences as a base for the next class's discussion or writing. For an Art class students had to go look at the sculpture at the entrance to LCC, then come back to class to discuss their impressions of it. For an oral communication class, students had to listen to the TV at home for 10 minutes with the sound off; they used this experience to reflect on the use of nonverbal communication. Another professor had her students use a "writer's notebook", in which they wrote brief, informal reactions to issues, experiences, or questions. Sometimes the professor would ask them to bring their notebooks to class and use something they had already written (and therefore already begun to think about) as a basis for an in-class writing assignment. She said, "it really helps with writing anxiety a lot, because they know that they've thought about it, they've already got something [to write about]."

Students contributed to class discussions by providing examples from their own experience. Their contributions, coupled with a professor's positive response, encouraged other students to come forward with their own examples. In one class, a professor asked for examples, and waited for the students to give them. When they did, she responded even if the examples were not directly relevant. In addition, when she gave examples, they were relevant to the students' experiences--examples from popular movies or examples of living in the city, to name a few.

At other times, students were unable to contribute to a class discussion because the example given by the professor had no meaning for the students. For instance, a professor used the example of playing billiards to explain a sociological principle, yet he did not ask if any of the students had ever played billiards. Toward the end of his explanation he finally inquired, and two or three students raised their hands. However, he did not use another example for students who could not identify with billiards. This class was quiet, with very little student involvement.

A final example of student involvement once again illustrates the importance of bringing culturally diverse content into the classroom. A Chinese-American student was able to explain to his reading class the customs underlying a story they were reading about a Chinese family. For students unfamiliar with Chinese culture, the story did not make very much sense, but after he explained what was going on within the cultural traditions, they understood. Using content that was culturally diverse allowed more students to become a part of the classroom dialogue. In this case, the professor had no expertise in Chinese culture, but he invited his students to contribute.

Students in learning communities expressed confidence that they could succeed

Students who were satisfied with their experiences in learning communities and who expressed the value of social and academic support also expressed confidence that they would succeed. One woman in the New Student House put it this way:

> LaGuardia's so big, and we have so many students, you put an average student in LaGuardia you seem to get lost . . . . You put a group of 25 students in one class [New Student House], they can find friends, maybe lasting friendships in the school. They can get along better, and the reason they put those three classes together--the kids will stay in school longer. They won't get lost.

She linked knowing people and making friends with the continuity of the three courses, and concluded that they would stay in school longer. She said this at the end of the Fall semester, and she was still meeting up with her friends from the New Student House in the Spring semester, even though they were not in any of the same courses.

Students were confident about succeeding, either by staying at LCC and getting a degree, or transferring and getting a degree. Success was also defined as getting a good job. Many students talked about transferring from LCC, either before or after they completed a degree. Their confidence in speaking of their plans to transfer indicated their belief that they really would be able to transfer, which to their minds equalled success. Even when the researcher talked to students in the spring, after they had received their Fall semester grades, students spoke confidently of getting degrees, transferring, and getting jobs.

As the many examples in this section demonstrate, students in learning communities received much social and academic support, both from their peers and professors. Social and academic support were mutually reinforcing, each building on the other as students got to know each other and began to help each other with class assignments. In turn, students in learning communities expressed satisfaction with their experiences, were involved in classes, and were confident that they could succeed. The next section of findings will explore other factors about learning communities that contributed to students' positive experiences.

Consistent Structure of Learning Communities

In the previous section of findings, we described how students in learning communities received social and academic support, and how that contributed to their satisfaction, involvement in classes, and confidence that they would succeed. The high levels of social and academic support reflected the interactive nature of learning communities--that students and professors interacted consistently across courses. In this section of the findings, we turn to some of the more structural aspects of learning communities that facilitated this interaction. They include scheduling courses in contiguous blocks of time, expectations and organizing frameworks that were consistent across courses, and continuity of topics. The operative theme in this section is consistency and continuity--both of which were facilitated across courses through the use of learning communities.

Courses were scheduled with students in mind

Courses in most learning communities were scheduled for a contiguous block of class time, thereby allowing students to have blocks of non-class time when they could work. This was an important consideration for many students. George complained about his and Julia's schedules for the semester after they were in a liberal arts cluster. His classes were all in the afternoon, hers were from 8 to 1 in the morning and afternoon, then again from 4 to 9 in the evening. Julia's schedule left her no time to work, except on weekends, and she needed to work more than that. George's classes were all in a row, but smack in the middle of the day. In the cluster their classes had been in the mornings, with extra sessions on one or two afternoons.

Scheduling learning communities to include courses that were requirements for students' majors or degrees was as important as scheduling classes in a contiguous block of time. Even students who were enthusiastic about learning communities were hesitant to say that they would enroll for another if it did not meet requirements. The importance of this consideration goes back to the diversity of students who were at LCC. The competing demands of work, financial considerations, family obligations, and commuting time combined in such a way that administrators at LCC had to construct learning communities so that they met degree requirements and anticipated students' work schedules.

Another structural feature of learning communities involved the amount of time that students spent in classes. Students in liberal arts clusters had an extra hour of class time per week in the form of the Integrated Seminar; therefore they had an extra hour of contact with professors. Students in the New Student House had an hour per week that they met with their academic counselor. They worked on study skills, test taking strategies, and other college survival skills. Had these hours not been scheduled in as a part of the learning community, it is doubtful that students would have initiated such contacts on their own, on such a consistent basis.

The additional hour of class time scheduled for liberal arts clusters in the form of an Integrated Seminar did not always involve integrating topics across the classes. Professors acknowledged this, and said that they often used the Integrated Seminar to extend the time that students were able to spend on their Research Paper course, for example. At first it was thought that by not spending all the time on integrating information across classes, the students were not getting the full benefit of the learning community. Then we realized that given the constraints of student schedules outlined above, the students were benefiting from

the extra hour of class time in many ways. It gave the students more time to work on assignments, assist each other, and ask questions of the professor. One professor explained that she used the Integrated Seminar for the added research and computer time it gave her students. She had more time to spend with the students on the same number of assignments that they used to do in fewer class hours. She felt less rushed, and she believed that the students felt less rushed.

Students in learning communities were given consistent expectations and organizing frameworks across courses

Consistent expectations and organizing frameworks reduced the confusion of competing expectations of multiple courses. In those learning communities where professors regularly communicated with each other, the professors were able to come to consensus on some mutual assignments, and be aware of each others' expectations for other assignments. Then, when students talked about a professor or her assignments to another professor, that professor was able to give consistent information.

For example, Professor C., a history professor, taught in a learning community with Professor L., in computing, and Professor J., in English. The latter taught the Composition and Research Paper courses, and in doing so focused on the form of writing a research paper--citing material, writing an outline, crafting an argument. C. focused on the content of the research paper--history. Students were required to hand in the same research paper to both professors, but each was teaching different skills and information. The content of C.'s course, however, also overlapped with the content of L.'s course, and the readings overlapped. This freed up time for professors and students because the professors did not all have to focus on the form of the research paper, and the students did not have to be reading entirely different things for each course. The material was reinforced from class to class, but so were the skills the professors expected the students to master.

Students liked the continuity of content across courses that was present in learning communities

Students liked it when they clearly saw the linkages between courses, and some thought it helped them to learn the material better. Students said that being in a cluster was helpful because their peers had similar information, and they were always working on the

topic. They could always ask questions or talk about topics, even if they were not in the "right" class. As one student said, "We try to relate whatever we learn from one class to the other class; [professors] are trying to relate them to all three subjects [reading, writing, oral communication]." Another student agreed: "They're all connected, you know, whatever we do for one class, we do it in the other class the same thing".

The overlap of topics and assignments that was an integral part of the learning communities blurred the lines between courses; consequently students were not required to segment all the information they received into separate compartments in their minds. For example, students in the "Men seeing women, women seeing women" cluster were working in small groups in their English class. They were supposed to be writing a fairy tale with the usual gender stereotypes reversed. While some students were working on that, however, others were thinking and talking about other assignments. One woman asked the person next to her if she knew of any references for a paper she was writing; in another group a man talked about how he was thinking of starting his Oral Communications paper. He was thinking about another class, but because it was on a similar theme, he was able to switch between the two and think about both.

The importance of continuity of content was impressed upon the researcher when she observed two English classes. In one, each small group was reading a different story. When the students came back into the larger class to share what they had talked about, they had little common basis for discussion because the theme that was present in all the stories was not set out clearly as the main topic. Students became preoccupied with the variety of plots. In the other class, students focused on the same story, but had different questions to discuss in their small groups. Since they all knew the plot, they focused on the themes presented. When they returned to the larger group everyone understood each small group's report because they all knew the story. They were not overwhelmed with multiple plots and multiple topics of discussion.

It seems, then, that it is necessary to achieve a balance between giving students variety and continuity, even in the same class. When students were overwhelmed with details or topics, they foundered in their small groups. As important as it was to have consistency across topics, within and across courses, it was equally important to give students clear instructions and tangible goals. Without these, students in groups were liable to drift off topic, or talk about the topic but not in any focused, directed way. With clear instructions and goals, such as writing a short fairy tale, or answering three questions, students accomplished much in their small groups.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: SUMMARY

The findings of the qualitative portion of this report have been presented in four sections: cultural diversity at LaGuardia Community College, students in learning communities formed groups, students in learning communities reported high levels of social and academic support, and students benefited from the consistent structure of learning communities. By way of reinforcing these findings, we would submit four additional points that span the findings and bring them together.

The theme that came across most clearly was students' response to being with and being able to interact with a consistent set of peers. Students said that group work and peer collaboration was easier and more fun than traditional ways of constructing the classroom. Students recognized the absence of clusters in subsequent semesters, and missed them. Part of what students said was that discrete courses seemed harder--when they took classes alone it was more difficult. Some thought the content was more difficult, but the other part of the difficulty was the solitude and being on their own. Rachael was disappointed not to see her friends so often. Debbie agreed with Rachael: "Oh, yeah. Everyone's on their own. We don't see our friends any more. We bump into them, we see some of them but not others". By the Spring semester students had experienced both learning communities and discrete courses. On the whole, students preferred learning communities.

A second point that came up in a variety of ways was that students valued diversity in learning communities. As students formed groups in classes, they interacted with peers from other cultures and found that they were interesting, not threatening. As the example of the Chinese-American student who gave additional meaning to the story in an English class demonstrated, students were able to contribute information about their cultures and learn from each other. The students who told me about the limited contact with people of diverse cultures at the other CUNY colleges were proud of the mixture of cultures at LCC. Said one, "we're all mixed up together more and it's very friendly, and you get to know people from different countries."

Related to this second point was the fact that professors in learning communities addressed different cultures (gender, class, ethnicity) across courses. The "Men seeing women, women seeing women" cluster focused on the role of gender across the courses--male and female characteristics of communication, and stereotypes and role models in literature.

The texts that were used also reflected the emphasis on including diverse authors, and cross-cultural content. Diversity was valued and recognized so much so at LaGuardia that students sometimes reported that they felt that the diversity of people was made too much of. They liked the diversity, and sometimes took it for granted, as if it was natural. As noted earlier, the diversity of cultures at LCC was normal.

A third point that was emphasized throughout was the continuity of topics across courses in learning communities, which served to support students academically. Learning communities were an opportunity for professors, and therefore students, to focus on a broad theme. Students could see connections in topics across classes, especially in those learning communities where faculty planned carefully to overlap topics, assignments, and readings. For example, the New Student House had three sections which met together three or four times to watch two movies (Mississippi Masala and Native Son) and have a large group discussion about the themes of racism and culture. Because the three sections had the same classes and were taught by the same professors, the professors could arrange such a gathering. They had enough flexibility in their schedules and they coordinated their efforts closely enough to make that possible.

Learning communities were an opportunity for professors to focus on a broad theme. As in the case of the New Student House and other liberal arts clusters, that opportunity was dependent upon the ability and the willingness of the professors to work together. The most closely coordinated learning community seemed to be the New Student House, where faculty met weekly and a professor had release time to coordinate and administrate. Some of the least thematically linked learning communities were those where faculty admitted that they rarely communicated.

Finally, learning communities were for students a brief, transient experience of a different way of learning, and a different way of organizing the classroom. Students recognized that they liked the experience of learning communities, yet they were not encouraged to reflect on why that positive experience was limited to a learning community, or why they did not achieve it outside of a learning community. This is why I refer to the learning community experience as transient. It lasted as long as the semester, and although students wished that it could continue, it did not. Learning communities were institutionalized firmly at LCC, but they were not characteristic of students' whole educational experience. Although some more advanced learning communities are available for some students, these paired courses are limited to courses within a specific major. Students enter the college having chosen a major and begin major courses as soon as possible.

This situation may preclude participation in a learning community. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that learning communities permeated every type of degree or program to some extent (liberal arts majors had to take a cluster, students in vocational majors had the option to do so). Therefore every student at LaGuardia had the opportunity to experience this type of learning, if only for a brief time.

PART SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

LaGuardia Community College has a long history of innovation. Its learning community programs are but one of a number of innovative efforts to enhance student learning at the College. Learning communities have been at existence at the College for a number of years. A wide range, if not the large majority, of faculty have participated in them and have been trained in a variety of collaborative and cooperative teaching techniques. When one compares the experience of students in the learning communities with those of students in comparison classes, one is in fact comparing students who participate in a variety of innovative classes, learning community and comparison. The primary distinction between the two groups is not so much one of innovative teaching to traditional teaching, but one of a shared curricular experience to that of largely independent course experience. As a result, the sense one has of the "impact" of learning communities upon student experience - resulting from a comparison of different groups of students, tends to underestimate the impact one might observe in more traditional collegiate settings or in settings where the faculty are not so widely trained in collaborative and cooperative teaching techniques. In this regard it is revealing that rates of persistence at LaGuardia Community College is considerably higher than other community colleges in the City of New York and of community colleges generally regardless of location.

Quantitative Panel Study: Tracing the Impacts of Participation in Learning Communities

Students in learning communities, as a group, reported very similar activity levels activities, in and outside class, as did students in the comparison classes. As a group, their frequency and patterns of interaction with the faculty, other students, and in a variety of learning domains were very similar. The one exception were students in the New Student House program. On the areas of faculty interaction, writing, participation in clubs, and in the arts, they reported significantly more activity than all other groups, learning community and comparison.

Similarities in activities were not reflected in patterns of perceptions. Student in learning communities of all types were significantly more positive in their perceptions of their classes, other students, faculty, counselors, the campus climate, and their own involvement than were students in the comparison classes. Again, this was most noticeably among students in the New Student House program. They were more positive in their views of all aspects of the college.

Differences in perceptions were translated into small but noticeable differences both in earned credit and accumulative grade point average during the academic year. In all cases, save for the Liberal Arts Cluster students, students in learning communities outperformed students in the comparison classes. And this was the case despite their having lower grade point averages in high school.

Though measures of persistence within the College showed only a slight gain for learning community students (77.7 to 75.9 percent), data on intended transfer and continuation indicated that learning community students were significantly more likely to continue in higher education than were comparison class students (88.5 vs. 77.9).

In this regard, it should be noted that such behaviors are one of the intended goals of the programs. Faculty hope to encourage students to reach higher. Indeed, in the qualitative portion of the study, we noted that a number of learning community students spoke of having "raised their sights" during their participation in the programs.

Qualitative Findings: Constructing Safe Havens for Learning

The findings of the qualitative portion of this report have been presented in four sections: cultural diversity at LaGuardia Community College, students in learning communities formed groups, students in learning communities reported high levels of social and academic support, and students benefited from the consistent structure of learning communities. By way of reinforcing these findings, we would submit four additional points that span the findings and bring them together.

A theme that came across most clearly was students' response to being with and being able to interact with a consistent set of peers. Students said that group work and peer collaboration was easier and more fun than traditional ways of constructing the classroom. Students recognized the absence of clusters in subsequent semesters, and missed them. Part

of what students said was that discrete courses seemed harder--when they took classes alone it was more difficult. Some thought the content was more difficult, but the other part of the difficulty was the solitude and being on their own. Rachael was disappointed not to see her friends so often. Debbie agreed with Rachael: "Oh, yeah. Everyone's on their own. We don't see our friends any more. We bump into them, we see some of them but not others". By the Spring semester students had experienced both learning communities and discrete courses. On the whole, students preferred learning communities.

A second point that came up in a variety of ways was that students valued diversity in learning communities. As students formed groups in classes, they interacted with peers from other cultures and found that they were interesting, not threatening. As the example of the Chinese-American student who gave additional meaning to the story in an English class demonstrated, students were able to contribute information about their cultures and learn from each other. The students who told me about the limited contact with people of diverse cultures at the other CUNY colleges were proud of the mixture of cultures at LCC. Said one, "we're all mixed up together more and it's very friendly, and you get to know people from different countries."

Related to this second point was the fact that professors in learning communities addressed different cultures (gender, class, ethnicity) across courses. The "Men seeing women, women seeing women" cluster focused on the role of gender across the courses--male and female characteristics of communication, and stereotypes and role models in literature. The texts that were used also reflected the emphasis on including diverse authors, and cross-cultural content. Diversity was valued and recognized so much so at LaGuardia that students sometimes reported that they felt that the diversity of people was made too much of. They liked the diversity, and sometimes took it for granted, as if it was natural. As noted earlier, the diversity of cultures at LCC was normal.

A third point that was emphasized throughout was the continuity of topics across courses in learning communities, which served to support students academically. Learning communities were an opportunity for professors, and therefore students, to focus on a broad theme. Students could see connections in topics across classes, especially in those learning communities where faculty planned carefully to overlap topics, assignments, and readings. For example, the New Student House had three sections which met together three or four times to watch two movies (Mississippi Masala and Native Son) and have a large group discussion about the themes of racism and culture. Because the three sections had the same classes and were taught by the same professors, the professors could arrange such a

gathering. They had enough flexibility in their schedules and they coordinated their efforts closely enough to make that possible.

Learning communities were an opportunity for professors to focus on a broad theme. As in the case of the New Student House and other liberal arts clusters, that opportunity was dependent upon the ability and the willingness of the professors to work together. The most closely coordinated learning community seemed to be the New Student House, where faculty met weekly and a professor had release time to coordinate and administrate. Some of the least thematically linked learning communities were those where faculty admitted that they rarely communicated.

Finally, learning communities were for students a brief, transient experience of a different way of learning, and a different way of organizing the classroom. Students recognized that they liked the experience of learning communities, yet they were not encouraged to reflect on why that positive experience was limited to a learning community, or why they did not achieve it outside of a learning community. This is why I refer to the learning community experience as transient. It lasted as long as the semester, and although students wished that it could continue, it did not. Learning communities were institutionalized firmly at LCC, but they were not characteristic of students' whole educational experience. Although some more advanced learning communities are available for some students, these paired courses are limited to courses within a specific major. Students enter the college having chosen a major and begin major courses as soon as possible. This situation may preclude participation in a learning community. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that learning communities permeated every type of degree or program to some extent (liberal arts majors had to take a cluster, students in vocational majors had the option to do so). Therefore every student at LaGuardia had the opportunity to experience this type of learning, if only for a brief time.

REFERENCES

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1992). Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods. Second Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bogdan, R. C. & Taylor, S. J. (1990). Looking at the bright side: A positive approach to qualitative policy and evaluation research. Qualitative Sociology, 13(2), 183-192.

Crowson, R. L. (1987). Qualitative research methods in higher education. In J. C. Smart, (Ed.), Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, 3, (pp.1-56). New York: Agathon Press.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine.

Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. A. (1992). Cooperative learning: Increasing college faculty instructional productivity. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 4. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Kuh, G. D. & Andreas, R. E. (1991). It's about time: Using qualitative methods in student life studies. Journal of College Student Development, 32(5), 397-405.

Kuh, G. D., et al. (1986). Changes is research on college students published in selected journals between 1969 and 1983. The Review of Higher Education, 9(2), 177-192.

Shelly, A. & Sibert, E. (1987). The QUALOG user's manual. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University.

Pascarella, E., and P. Terenzini (1991), The impact of college on students. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Storck, B. (1994), New Student House Report. An unpublished report by the Office of Institutional Research, LaGuardia Community College, Long Island City, New York.

Tinto, V. (1987), Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. and P. Russo (1994), "Coordinated Studies Programs: The Effect on Student Involvement at a Community College." Community College Review, 22 (2): 34-42.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

BEGINNING STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (COMPARISON CLASSES)

BEGINNING STUDENT SURVEY

Dear LaGuardia Community College Student:

We need your assistance. You have been selected to participate in a study of college learning carried out by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment.

The attached questionnaire asks you to respond to a range of questions about yourself and the kinds of activities you enjoy doing. Please answer each question as best you can.

The information you provide is entirely **confidential**. The results of the study will be reported in group form only. Information about you will be known only to the research team from the National Center. **In no case** will any of your responses be used to identify you as an individual.

The results of this study will help LaGuardia Community College better plan its programs to assist you and other students who follow you. We greatly appreciate your participation.

We expect the report of this study to be available in January 1994. If you wish to read this report you may contact Ms. Barbara Astone, Office of Developmental and Special Programs, LaGuardia Community College, M412.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

If you decide not to participate, please do not fill in any part of the answer form. Simply hand in the form when the other students finish.

Vincent Tinto
Project Director

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. My decision about whether or not to participate will have no effect on my grade. I also understand that as part of this study, my FSAP scores and my transcript will be made available to the researchers. None of this information will be used to identify me as an individual. It will be reported in group form only.

Signed_____ Date_____

NAME: _____
Last Middle First

STUDENT ID NUMBER: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

IN THE QUESTIONS BELOW, CIRCLE THE BOLDFACE NUMBER THAT INDICATES THE CORRECT RESPONSE.

A. Age:

1. 18 or under
2. 19
3. 20
4. 21
5. 22 to 24
6. 25 to 29
7. 30 to 39
8. 40 or over

B. Family status:

1. Unmarried (including Single and Widowed)
2. Married
3. Living with a partner
4. Separated/Divorced

C. Are you responsible for the care of other persons in your household? (e.g., children, elderly persons)

1. Yes 2. No

D. Indicate your overall high school average.

1. B+ to A: (86-100)
2. B to B+ (81-85)
3. C+ to B (76-80)
4. C to C+ (71-75)
5. D to C (65-70)
6. Below D (less than 65)

E. Are you currently employed? 1. Yes 2. No

F. **IF EMPLOYED**, are you employed:

1. At the college 2. Outside the college

G. **IF EMPLOYED**, how many hours per week are you working?

1. 1 to 10
2. 11 to 20
3. 21 to 30
4. 31 to 40
5. Over 40
6. Does not apply

H. Are you currently receiving financial aid from the College?

1. Yes 2. No

I. How much time do you spend commuting to LaGuardia Community College?

1. Less than 15 minutes
2. 15 - 30 minutes
3. 30 minutes - one hour
4. one hour - one hour and a half
5. more than one hour and a half

J. Is this your first semester at LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

K. **IF NO**, how many tuition hours have you earned **BEFORE** this session? (Tuition hours means the total number of hours per week you spend in classes)

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

L. How many tuition hours are you enrolled for during **THIS SESSION**? (Tuition hours means the total number of hours per week you spend in classes)

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

M. Are you also enrolled in the 6-week session?

1. Yes 2. No

N. **IF YES**, how many hours per week will you be spending in class in the 6-week session?

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

O. Did you attend another college before coming to LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

P. Why did you decide to go to college (Circle all that apply).

1. To improve myself intellectually
2. To be able to make more money
3. To learn more about the world
4. It seemed the best thing to do since I couldn't find a job
5. To prepare for a particular occupation
6. To find out more about myself
7. To prepare for senior college
8. To get a better job
9. My parents wanted me to go

Q. Why did you enroll at LaGuardia Community College? (Circle all that apply)

1. It offers the kind of program I want
2. It was assigned to me by the University
3. It is inexpensive
4. It has a good reputation
5. It is conveniently located
6. It is easy
7. I am comfortable with the students who come here
8. It offers work experience (co-operative education)
9. Credits can be transferred to other colleges

R. What is the highest degree you intend to obtain?

1. None
2. Vocational Certificate
3. Associate (2-year) Degree
4. Bachelor's (4-year) Degree (BA,BS,etc.)
5. Master's Degree (MA,MS,etc.)
6. Doctorate (Ph.D or ED.D)
7. Medical Degree (M.D., D.D.S., etc.)
8. Law Degree (J.D. or LL.B.)
9. Other

S. How important is it for you to complete a college degree?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Slightly important
4. Not at all important

T. What is the highest level of education completed by your parents?(Circle one in each column)

	Father	Mother
Grammar school or less	1.	1.
Some high school	2.	2.
High school graduate	3.	3.
Post secondary other than college..	4.	4.
Some College	5.	5.
College Degree	6.	6.
More than College Degree	7.	7.
Do Not Know	8.	8.

U. Which type of class format do you **MOST** prefer? (circle one)

1. Lecture type
2. Small-Group type
3. Independent study contract
4. Laboratory or shop
5. Study group
6. Correspondence course
7. Other
8. No preference

V. How do you **BEST** learn? (circle one)

1. Alone
2. With friends
3. Being tutored
4. In a classroom lecture
5. In a classroom discussion
6. In a laboratory or shop
7. Do not know

W. What type of activities do you **MOST** like to do when you are in class? (Circle one).

1. Take notes
2. Ask questions about class material
3. Sit and listen to the teacher
4. Make comments about class material
5. Talk to friends sitting near you
6. Listen to the comments of other students
7. Have small group discussions
8. None of the above
9. No preference

X. How do you learn class material? (Circle all that apply)

1. Review notes I take in class
2. Read the textbook
3. Discuss material with others
4. Rewrite class notes
5. Study with friends
6. Do additional reading beyond the assignment
7. Pay attention in class
8. None of the above

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Y. How well prepared do you feel you are for college work in the following areas?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
a. Ability to write sentences in standard English	1.	2.	3.	4.
b. Ability to write a well-organized paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
c. Ability to write a research paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
d. Ability to comprehend written material	1.	2.	3.	4.
e. Ability to speak clearly, effectively	1.	2.	3.	4.
f. Ability to manage time for college work	1.	2.	3.	4.
g. Ability to use general mathematical computations	1.	2.	3.	4.
h. Ability to use a foreign language other than English	1.	2.	3.	4.
i. Ability to use the library for research	1.	2.	3.	4.
j. Study skills for effective learning	1.	2.	3.	4.

Z. What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:

	Good Chance	Some Chance	Little Chance	No Chance
Need extra time to complete your degree requirments?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Drop out of this college temporarily?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Transfer to another college before graduating?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Make at least a "B" average?	1.	2.	3.	4.

AA. Why did you decide to enroll in this paired, enhanced study group or cluster course? (circle all that apply)

1. course seemed interesting
2. course required for a major
3. chance to meet other students
4. only way to get a class
5. to get a better grade
6. reputation of instructor(s)
7. reputation of particular course
8. reputation of program
9. other _____

AB. Have you enrolled in paired, enhanced study group or cluster courses before at LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

Students have different views or perspectives on their college experiences and value different aspects of those experiences. Below is a series of statements describing a variety of orientations to the college experience. You will probably agree with some of the statements and disagree with others. There are no "right" answers here. Please circle the number on the scale below which indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy investigating a topic of interest to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I frequently question or challenged teachers' statements and ideas before I accept them as right	1.	2.	3.	4.
What I learn in a course is more important than the grade I get	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer courses in which the material helps me understand something about myself	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning about myself during college is probably more important than preparing for a career	1.	2.	3.	4.
Getting the best grades I can is very important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
Whether I stay in college depends on circumstances beyond my control (e.g. family's health)	1.	2.	3.	4.
I'd rather figure something out for myself than simply have it explained to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I am willing to work very hard in a course in order to learn the material, even if it won't lead to a higher grade	1.	2.	3.	4.
The grade I get in a course depends on how hard the instructor grades, not on carefully I study	1.	2.	3.	4.
I've read books or articles with which I strongly disagree	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I don't understand something in a course I work at it until I do	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy the challenge of learning complicated new material	1.	2.	3.	4.
Good luck is more important for academic success than hard work	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading poetry and literature	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading about science	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading about history	1.	2.	3.	4.
Getting a good grade in a course depends more on being "naturally" smart than on how hard I work	1.	2.	3.	4.
My major purpose for being in college is to prepare myself for a career	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy talking with people who have values different from mine because it helps me understand myself and my values better	1.	2.	3.	4.
I consider the best teachers to be those who can tie things learned in class to things that are important to me in my personal life	1.	2.	3.	4.
I can almost always do well in a course if I plan and organize my study time	1.	2.	3.	4.
It is more important to learn ideas and concepts in a course than it is to learn the facts and basic information presented	1.	2.	3.	4.
I often talk to my teachers outside of class about the ideas presented during class	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I have trouble learning the material in a course, it is because the teacher isn't doing a very good job teaching	1.	2.	3.	4.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Learning about people from different cultures is a very important part of a college education	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning how to learn is important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy expressing my ideas in writing	1.	2.	3.	4.
I frequently do more reading in a course than is required simply because it interests me	1.	2.	3.	4.
The courses I enjoy the most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning is important to me because it will give me greater control over my life	1.	2.	3.	4.
I study more to maintain my grade-point average than to really understand the material	1.	2.	3.	4.
For me, one of the most important benefits of a college education will be a better understanding of myself and my values	1.	2.	3.	4.
Developing a clearer sense of who I am is very important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
After I write about something, I see that subject differently	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer reading things that are relevant to my personal experience	1.	2.	3.	4.
If I have something good to read, I'm never bored	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy taking courses that challenge my beliefs and values	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I do well on a test, it is usually because I was well prepared, not because the test was easy	1.	2.	3.	4.
My academic experiences (i.e. courses, labs, studying, discussions with faculty) will be the most enjoyable part of college	1.	2.	3.	4.
My academic experiences (i.e. courses, labs, studying, discussions with faculty) will be the most important part of college	1.	2.	3.	4.
I expect have frequent discussions with my teachers outside of class	1.	2.	3.	4.
I expect to have frequent discussion about class material with my classmates outside of class	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy courses that are intellectually challenging	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy having discussions with people whose ideas and values are different from my own	1.	2.	3.	4.
The real value of a college education lies in being introduced to different values	1.	2.	3.	4.
I can learn more from doing than from reading	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer exams requiring me to organize and interpret information or ideas over exams that ask me only to remember facts or information	1.	2.	3.	4.
I often have discussions with other students about ideas or concepts presented in classes	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer to do assignments in which I have to analyze and interpret what I've read rather than just summarize and report	1.	2.	3.	4.
Contact with individuals whose background (e.g. race, national origin) is different from my own is an essential part of my college education	1.	2.	3.	4.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEGINNING STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (PROGRAM)

BEGINNING STUDENT SURVEY

Dear LaGuardia Community College Student:

We need your assistance. You have been selected to participate in a study of college learning carried out by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment.

The attached questionnaire asks you to respond to a range of questions about yourself and the kinds of activities you enjoy doing. Please answer each question as best you can.

The information you provide is entirely **confidential**. The results of the study will be reported in group form only. Information about you will be known only to the research team from the National Center. **In no case** will any of your responses be used to identify you as an individual.

The results of this study will help LaGuardia Community College better plan its programs to assist you and other students who follow you. We greatly appreciate your participation.

We expect the report of this study to be available in January 1994. If you wish to read this report you may contact Ms. Barbara Astone, Office of Developmental and Special Programs, LaGuardia Community College, M412.

Thank you for your time and cooperation!

If you decide not to participate, please do not fill in any part of the answer form. Simply hand in the form when the other students finish.

Vincent Tinto
Project Director

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. My decision about whether or not to participate will have no effect on my grade. I also understand that as part of this study, my FSAP scores and my transcript will be made available to the researchers. None of this information will be used to identify me as an individual. It will be reported in group form only.

Signed_____ Date_____

NAME: _____
Last Middle First

STUDENT ID NUMBER: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

IN THE QUESTIONS BELOW, CIRCLE THE BOLDFACE NUMBER THAT INDICATES THE CORRECT RESPONSE.

A. Age:

1. 18 or under
2. 19
3. 20
4. 21
5. 22 to 24
6. 25 to 29
7. 30 to 39
8. 40 or over

B. Family status:

1. Unmarried (including Single and Widowed)
2. Married
3. Living with a partner
4. Separated/Divorced

C. Are you responsible for the care of other persons in your household? (e.g., children, elderly persons)

1. Yes 2. No

D. Indicate your overall high school average.

1. B+ to A (86-100)
2. B to B+ (81-85)
3. C+ to B (76-80)
4. C to C+ (71-75)
5. D to C (65-70)
6. Below D (less than 65)

E. Are you currently employed? 1. Yes 2. No

F. IF EMPLOYED, are you employed:

1. At the college 2. Outside the college

G. IF EMPLOYED, how many hours per week are you working?

1. 1 to 10
2. 11 to 20
3. 21 to 30
4. 31 to 40
5. Over 40
6. Does not apply

H. Are you currently receiving financial aid from the College?

1. Yes 2. No

I. How much time do you spend commuting to LaGuardia Community College?

1. Less than 15 minutes
2. 15 - 30 minutes
3. 30 minutes - one hour
4. one hour - one hour and a half
5. more than one hour and a half

J. Is this your first semester at LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

K. IF NO, how many tuition hours have you earned **BEFORE** this session? (Tuition hours means the total number of hours per week you spend in classes)

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

L. How many tuition hours are you enrolled for during **THIS SESSION**? (Tuition hours means the total number of hours per week you spend in classes)

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

M. Are you also enrolled in the 6-week session?

1. Yes 2. No

N. IF YES, how many hours per week will you be spending in class in the 6-week session?

1. 6 hours or less
2. 7 - 11 hours
3. 12 hours or more

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

O. Did you attend another college before coming to LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

P. Why did you decide to go to college (Circle all that apply).

1. To improve myself intellectually
2. To be able to make more money
3. To learn more about the world
4. It seemed the best thing to do since I couldn't find a job
5. To prepare for a particular occupation
6. To find out more about myself
7. To prepare for senior college
8. To get a better job
9. My parents wanted me to go

Q. Why did you enroll at LaGuardia Community College? (Circle all that apply)

1. It offers the kind of program I want
2. It was assigned to me by the University
3. It is inexpensive
4. It has a good reputation
5. It is conveniently located
6. It is easy
7. I am comfortable with the students who come here
8. It offers work experience (co-operative education)
9. Credits can be transferred to other colleges

R. What is the highest degree you intend to obtain?

1. None
2. Vocational Certificate
3. Associate (2-year) Degree
4. Bachelor's (4-year) Degree (BA,BS,etc.)
5. Master's Degree (MA,MS,etc.)
6. Doctorate (Ph.D or ED.D)
7. Medical Degree (M.D., D.D.S., etc.)
8. Law Degree (J.D. or LL.B.)
9. Other

S. How important is it for you to complete a college degree?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Slightly important
4. Not at all important

T. What is the highest level of education completed by your parents?(Circle one in each column)

	Father	Mother
Grammar school or less	1.	1.
Some high school	2.	2.
High school graduate	3.	3.
Post secondary other than college	4.	4.
Some College	5.	5.
College Degree	6.	6.
More than College Degree	7.	7.
Do Not Know	8.	8.

U. Which type of class format do you MOST prefer? (circle one)

1. Lecture type
2. Small-Group type
3. Independent study contract
4. Laboratory or shop
5. Study group
6. Correspondence course
7. Other
8. No preference

V. How do you BEST learn? (circle one)

1. Alone
2. With friends
3. Being tutored
4. In a classroom lecture
5. In a classroom discussion
6. In a laboratory or shop
7. Do not know

W. What type of activities do you MOST like to do when you are in class? (Circle one).

1. Take notes
2. Ask questions about class material
3. Sit and listen to the teacher
4. Make comments about class material
5. Talk to friends sitting near you
6. Listen to the comments of other students
7. Have small group discussions
8. None of the above
9. No preference

X. How do you learn class material? (Circle all that apply)

1. Review notes I take in class
2. Read the textbook
3. Discuss material with others
4. Rewrite class notes
5. Study with friends
6. Do additional reading beyond the assignment
7. Pay attention in class
8. None of the above

Y. How well prepared do you feel you are for college work in the following areas?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
a. Ability to write sentences in standard English	1.	2.	3.	4.
b. Ability to write a well-organized paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
c. Ability to write a research paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
d. Ability to comprehend written material	1.	2.	3.	4.
e. Ability to speak clearly, effectively	1.	2.	3.	4.
f. Ability to manage time for college work	1.	2.	3.	4.
g. Ability to use general mathematical computations	1.	2.	3.	4.
h. Ability to use a foreign language other than English	1.	2.	3.	4.
i. Ability to use the library for research	1.	2.	3.	4.
j. Study skills for effective learning	1.	2.	3.	4.

Z. What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:

	Good Chance	Some Chance	Little Chance	No Chance
Need extra time to complete your degree requirments?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Drop out of this college temporarily?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Transfer to another college before graduating?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Make at least a "B" average?	1.	2.	3.	4.

AA. Have you ever enrolled in paired, enhanced study group or cluster courses before at LaGuardia Community College?

1. Yes 2. No

AB. IF YES why did you decide to enroll in this paired, enhanced study group or cluster course? (circle all that apply)

1. course seemed interesting
2. course required for a major
3. chance to meet other students
4. only way to get a class
5. to get a better grade
6. reputation of instructor(s)
7. reputation of particular course
8. reputation of program
9. other _____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Students have different views or perspectives on their college experiences and value different aspects of those experiences. Below is a series of statements describing a variety of orientations to the college experience. You will probably agree with some of the statements and disagree with others. There are no "right" answers here. Please circle the number on the scale below which indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy investigating a topic of interest to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I frequently question or challenged teachers' statements and ideas before I accept them as right	1.	2.	3.	4.
What I learn in a course is more important than the grade I get	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer courses in which the material helps me understand something about myself	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning about myself during college is probably more important than preparing for a career	1.	2.	3.	4.
Getting the best grades I can is very important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
Whether I stay in college depends on circumstances beyond my control (e.g. family's health)	1.	2.	3.	4.
I'd rather figure something out for myself than simply have it explained to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I am willing to work very hard in a course in order to learn the material, even if it won't lead to a higher grade	1.	2.	3.	4.
The grade I get in a course depends on how hard the instructor grades, not on carefully I study	1.	2.	3.	4.
I've read books or articles with which I strongly disagree	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I don't understand something in a course I work at it until I do	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy the challenge of learning complicated new material	1.	2.	3.	4.
Good luck is more important for academic success than hard work	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading poetry and literature	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading about science	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy reading about history	1.	2.	3.	4.
Getting a good grade in a course depends more on being "naturally" smart than on how hard I work	1.	2.	3.	4.
My major purpose for being in college is to prepare myself for a career	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy talking with people who have values different from mine because it helps me understand myself and my values better	1.	2.	3.	4.
I consider the best teachers to be those who can tie things learned in class to things that are important to me in my personal life	1.	2.	3.	4.
I can almost always do well in a course if I plan and organize my study time	1.	2.	3.	4.
It is more important to learn ideas and concepts in a course than it is to learn the facts and basic information presented	1.	2.	3.	4.
I often talk to my teachers outside of class about the ideas presented during class	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I have trouble learning the material in a course, it is because the teacher isn't doing a very good job teaching	1.	2.	3.	4.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Learning about people from different cultures is a very important part of a college education	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning how to learn is important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy expressing my ideas in writing	1.	2.	3.	4.
I frequently do more reading in a course than is required simply because it interests me	1.	2.	3.	4.
The courses I enjoy the most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective	1.	2.	3.	4.
Learning is important to me because it will give me greater control over my life	1.	2.	3.	4.
I study more to maintain my grade-point average than to really understand the material	1.	2.	3.	4.
For me, one of the most important benefits of a college education will be a better understanding of myself and my values	1.	2.	3.	4.
Developing a clearer sense of who I am is very important to me	1.	2.	3.	4.
After I write about something, I see that subject differently	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer reading things that are relevant to my personal experience	1.	2.	3.	4.
If I have something good to read, I'm never bored	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy taking courses that challenge my beliefs and values	1.	2.	3.	4.
When I do well on a test, it is usually because I was well prepared, not because the test was easy	1.	2.	3.	4.
My academic experiences (i.e. courses, labs, studying, discussions with faculty) will be the most <u>enjoyable</u> part of college	1.	2.	3.	4.
My academic experiences (i.e. courses, labs, studying, discussions with faculty) will be the most <u>important</u> part of college	1.	2.	3.	4.
I expect have frequent discussions with my teachers outside of class	1.	2.	3.	4.
I expect to have frequent discussion about class material with my classmates outside of class	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy courses that are intellectually challenging	1.	2.	3.	4.
I enjoy having discussions with people whose ideas and values are different from my own	1.	2.	3.	4.
The real value of a college education lies in being introduced to different values	1.	2.	3.	4.
I can learn more from doing than from reading	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer exams requiring me to organize and interpret information or ideas over exams that ask me only to remember facts or information	1.	2.	3.	4.
I often have discussions with other students about ideas or concepts presented in classes	1.	2.	3.	4.
I prefer to do assignments in which I have to analyze and interpret what I've read rather than just summarize and report	1.	2.	3.	4.
Contact with individuals whose background (e.g. race, national origin) is different from my own is an essential part of my college education	1.	2.	3.	4.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FOLLOW-UP STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

FOLLOW-UP STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____
Last First Middle

STUDENT ID NUMBER _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

IN THE QUESTIONS BELOW, CIRCLE THE BOLDFACE NUMBER THAT INDICATES THE CORRECT RESPONSE.

A. Are you currently employed? **1.** Yes **2.** No

B. **IF EMPLOYED**, are you employed:

1. At the college **2.** Outside the college

C. **IF EMPLOYED**, how many hours per week are you working?

1. 1 to 10 hours
2. 11 to 20 hours
3. 21 to 30 hours
4. 31 to 40 hours
5. Over 40 hours

D. **IF EMPLOYED**, how does it affect your college work?

1. My job does not interfere with my college work.
2. My job takes some time from my college work.
3. My job takes a lot of time from my college work.

E. If you have family responsibilities, how does this affect your college work?

1. I don't have family responsibilities.
2. They do not interfere with my college work.
3. They take some time from my college work.
4. They take a lot of time from my college work.

F. Are you currently receiving financial aid?

1. Yes **2.** No

G. Is English your native language?

1. Yes **2.** No

H. How many tuition hours are you enrolled for during THIS SESSION?

1. 6 hours or less a week
2. 7 - 12 hours a week
3. more than 12 hours a week

I. What is the highest degree you intend to obtain?

1. None
2. Vocational certificate
3. Associate (2-year) degree
4. Bachelor's degree (BA,BS,etc.)
5. Master's degree (MA,MS,etc.)
6. Doctorate (Ph.D or ED.D)
7. Medical degree (MD, DDS, etc.)
8. Law degree (J.D., or LL.B.)
9. Other

J. How important is it for you to complete a college degree?

	from ANY college	from THIS college
Very important	1.	1.
Somewhat important	2.	2.
Slightly important	3.	3.
Not at all important	4.	4.

K. Which type of class organization do you MOST prefer? (circle one)

1. Lecture format
2. Small-Group type (in class)
3. Independent study
4. Laboratory type
5. Private tutor
6. Correspondence course
7. Study group
8. Other
9. No preference

L. How do you **BEST** learn? (circle one)

1. Alone
2. With friends
3. Being tutored
4. In a classroom lecture
5. In a classroom discussion
6. In a laboratory or shop
7. Do not know

M. About how many **hours a week** do you usually spend on campus, **not counting time attending class?**

1. None
2. 1 to 3 hours
3. 4 to 6 hours
4. 7 to 9 hours
5. 10 to 12 hours
6. more than 12 hours

N. About how many **hours a week** do you usually spend studying or preparing for your classes?

1. None
2. 1 to 5 hours
3. 6 to 10 hours
4. 11 to 15 hours
5. 16 to 20 hours
6. more than 20 hours

O. About how many **hours per week** do you usually spend studying with other students?

1. None
2. 1 to 5 hours
3. 6 to 10 hours
4. more than 10 hours

P. How often do you study with students from your classes?

1. Often
2. Sometimes
3. Never

Q. How well prepared do you feel you are for college work in the following areas?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
a. Ability to write sentences in standard English	1.	2.	3.	4.
b. Ability to write a well-organized paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
c. Ability to write research paper	1.	2.	3.	4.
d. Reading comprehension	1.	2.	3.	4.
e. Ability to speak clearly, effectively	1.	2.	3.	4.
f. Vocabulary	1.	2.	3.	4.
g. Ability to use general mathematical computations	1.	2.	3.	4.
h. A foreign language(s) other than English	1.	2.	3.	4.
i. Ability to find library materials for research	1.	2.	3.	4.
j. Study skills for effective learning	1.	2.	3.	4.
k. Managing time for college work	1.	2.	3.	4.

R. What is your best guess as to the chances that you will:

	Very Good Chance	Some Chance	Very Little Chance	No Chance
Need more than two years to complete your degree requirements?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Drop out of this college temporarily?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Transfer to another college before graduating?	1.	2.	3.	4.
Make at least a "B" average?	1.	2.	3.	4.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

Directions: In your experience at this college during the **CURRENT QUARTER**, about how often have you done each of the following? Indicate your responses by circling one of the choices to the right of each activity.

COURSE ACTIVITIES

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Participated in class discussions	1	2	3	4
Worked on a paper or project which combined ideas from different sources of information	1	2	3	4
Summarized major points and information from readings or notes	1	2	3	4
Tried to explain the material to another student	1	2	3	4
Did additional readings on topics that were introduced and discussed in class	1	2	3	4
Asked questions about points made in class discussions or readings	1	2	3	4
Studied course materials with other students	1	2	3	4
Applied principles and concepts learned in class to understand other problems or situations	1	2	3	4
Compared and contrasted different points of view presented in a course	1	2	3	4
Considered the accuracy and credibility of information from different sources	1	2	3	4
Participated in self-assessment activities	1	2	3	4
Participated in classes in which course content and curriculum were coordinated with that of other classes	1	2	3	4

LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Used the library as a quiet place to read or study material you brought with you	1	2	3	4
Read newspapers, magazines, or journals located in the library	1	2	3	4
Checked out books to read at home	1	2	3	4
Used the card catalogue or computer to find materials the library had on a topic	1	2	3	4
Prepared a bibliography or set of references for a term paper or report	1	2	3	4
Asked the librarian for help in finding materials on some topic	1	2	3	4
Found some interesting materials to read just by				

browsing in the stacks	1	2	3	4

FACULTY

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Asked an instructor for information about grades, make-up work assignments, etc.	1	2	3	4
Talked briefly with an instructor after class about course content	1	2	3	4
Made an appointment to meet with an instructor in his/her office	1	2	3	4
Discussed ideas for a term paper or other class project with an instructor	1	2	3	4
Discussed your career and/or educational plans, interests, and ambitions with an instructor	1	2	3	4
Discussed comments an instructor made on a test paper or paper you wrote	1	2	3	4
Talked informally with an instructor about current events, campus activities, or other common interests	1	2	3	4
Discussed your school performance, personal problems or difficulties with an instructor	1	2	3	4
Consulted with a faculty advisor about registration	1	2	3	4

STUDENT ACQUAINTANCES

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Had serious discussions with students who were much older or younger than you	1	2	3	4
Had serious discussions with students whose ethnic or cultural background was different from yours	1	2	3	4
Had serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values were different from yours	1	2	3	4
Had serious discussions with students whose political opinions were different from yours	1	2	3	4
Had serious discussions with students whose religious beliefs were different from yours	1	2	3	4
Had serious discussions with students from a country different from yours	1	2	3	4

WRITING ACTIVITIES

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Used a dictionary to look up the proper meaning, definition, and/or spelling of words	1	2	3	4
Prepared an outline to organize the sequence of ideas and points in a paper you were writing	1	2	3	4
Thought about grammar, sentence structure, paragraphs and word choices as you were writing	1	2	3	4
Wrote a rough draft of a paper or essay and revised it before handing it in	1	2	3	4
Used a computer (word processor) to write or type a paper	1	2	3	4
Asked other people to read something you wrote to see if it was clear to them	1	2	3	4
Spent at least 5 hours or more writing a paper	1	2	3	4
Asked an instructor for advice and help to improve your writing or about a comment he/she made on a paper you wrote	1	2	3	4
Submitted an outline and/or draft along with final paper	1	2	3	4

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Looked in the student newspaper or on bulletin boards for notices about campus events and student organizations	1	2	3	4
Read or asked about a student club or organization	1	2	3	4
Attended a meeting of a student club or organization	1	2	3	4

ARTS, MUSIC, AND THEATER ACTIVITIES

	Never	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Talked about art (painting, sculpture, architecture, film, artists, etc.) with other students at the college	1	2	3	4
Talked about music (classical, popular, musicians,etc.) with other students at the college	1	2	3	4
Talked about theater (plays, musicals, dance, etc.) with other students at the college	1	2	3	4
Attended or participated in an art of film exhibit at the college	1	2	3	4
Attended or participated in a concert or other musical event on campus	1	2	3	4
Attended or participated in a play, dance concert, or other theatre performance at the college	1	2	3	4

ESTIMATE OF GAINS

Directions: In thinking over your experiences in this college up to now, to what extent do you think you have gained or made progress in each of the following areas? Please circle one response for each item.

I HAVE GAINED OR MADE PROGRESS IN:	Very Little	Some	Quite A Bit	Very Much
Acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific job or type of work	1	2	3	4
Gaining information about career opportunities	1	2	3	4
Developing clearer career goals	1	2	3	4
Becoming acquainted with different fields of knowledge	1	2	3	4
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of art, music, and theater	1	2	3	4
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of literature (novels, stories, essays, poetry, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Writing clearly and effectively	1	2	3	4
Presenting ideas and information effectively in speaking with others	1	2	3	4
Acquiring the ability to use computers	1	2	3	4
Becoming aware of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life	1	2	3	4
Becoming clearer about my own values and standards about right and wrong	1	2	3	4
Understanding myself – my abilities and interests	1	2	3	4
Understanding mathematical concepts such as probabilities, proportions, etc.	1	2	3	4
Understanding the role of science and technology in society	1	2	3	4
Putting ideas together to see relationships, similarities, and differences between ideas	1	2	3	4
Developing the ability to learn on my own, pursue ideas, and find information I need	1	2	3	4
Developing the ability to speak and understand another language	1	2	3	4
Interpreting information in graphs and charts I see in newspapers, textbooks, and on TV	1	2	3	4
Developing an interest in political and economic events	1	2	3	4
Seeing the importance of history for understanding the present and the past	1	2	3	4
Learning more about other parts of the world and other people (Asia, Africa, South America, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Understanding other people	1	2	3	4
Getting along with different kinds of people	1	2	3	4
Developing good health habits and physical fitness	1	2	3	4
Becoming active in local/state/national/global issues	1	2	3	4

120129

COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

DIRECTIONS: Please circle the number on the scale that best locates your feeling about the college community, including other people and yourself based on your experience thus far at this college.

1. **CLASSES:**

Boring, Dull						Stimulating Involving
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

2. **OTHER STUDENTS**

Unfriendly, Unsupportive Unwelcoming						Friendly, Supportive Welcoming
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

3. **FACULTY:**

Unapproachable, Unsupportive Discouraging						Approachable, Supportive Encouraging
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

4. **COUNSELORS:**

Unapproachable, Unsupportive Discouraging						Approachable, Supportive Encouraging
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

5. **ADMINISTRATORS:**

Unhelpful, Inconsiderate Impersonal						Helpful, Considerate Personal
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

6. **OFFICE STAFF:**

Unhelpful, Inconsiderate Impersonal						Helpful, Considerate Personal
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

7. **CAMPUS CLIMATE:**

Unfriendly, uncomfortable						Friendly, comfortable
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

8. **YOURSELF:**

Alienated, Bored						Involved, Excited
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.

OUTCOMES

DIRECTIONS: The following questions ask about how participation in the Coordinated Studies Program may have effected you. Please feel free to continue your responses on the back of the page.

S. Has participating in the paired courses, enhanced study group or cluster of courses changed your outlook on local/national/world issues?

1. Yes 2. No

T. **IF YES,** how has your outlook changed? (please explain) _____

_____

_____

U. Would you recommend the paired courses, enhanced study group or cluster of courses to a friend?

1. Yes 2. No

V. Why or Why Not? (please explain) _____

_____

_____

W. If you could start over again, would you enroll in the paired courses, enhanced study group or cluster of courses?

1. Yes
2. Maybe
3. No

X. If you could start over again, would you enroll in this college?

1. Yes
2. Maybe
3. No

Y. Is there anything else about the Coordinated Studies Program you would like to tell us about? (Please explain)

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

TABLE B-1

AGE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

AGE	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
18 or under	30.6 (45)	19.5 (44)
19	18.4 (27)	12.4 (28)
20	14.3 (21)	13.7 (31)
21	5.4 (8)	10.6 (24)
22 to 24	11.6 (17)	16.4 (37)
25 to 29	11.6 (17)	13.3 (30)
30 to 39	6.1 (9)	11.1(25)
40 or over	2.0 (3)	3.1(7)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-2

FAMILY STATUS OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FAMILY STATUS	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Unmarried (Including single and widowed)	77.9 (113)	64.9 (146)
Married	9.7 (14)	17.3 (39)
Living with a partner	4.1 (6)	8.4 (19)
Separated/Divorced	8.3 (12)	9.3 (21)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-3

RESPONSIBLE CARE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

RESPONSIBLE FOR CARE OF OTHERS?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	18.6 (27)	23.7 (53)
No	81.4 (118)	76.3 (171)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-4

HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

OVERALL HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
B+ to A (86-100)	9.0 (13)	15.5 (34)
B to B+ (81-85)	27.8 (40)	41.6 (91)
C+ to B (76-80)	36.1 (52)	25.1(55)
C to C+ (71-75)	16.0 (23)	14.2 (31)
D to C (65-70)	9.7 (14)	2.7(6)
Below D (-65)	1.4 (2)	0.9 (2)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-5

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	32.0 (47)	35.8 (81)
No	68.0 (100)	64.2 (145)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-6

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF EMPLOYED, WHERE EMPLOYED?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
At the college	4.1 (2)	13.4 (11)
Outside the college	95.9 (47)	86.6 (71)

where & indicates empty cell

TABLE B-7

HOURS EMPLOYED OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF EMPLOYED, HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
1 to 10	4.8 (3)	9.8 (11)
11 to 20	25.8 (16)	16.1 (18)
21 to 30	25.8 (16)	26.8 (30)
31 to 40	17.7 (11)	12.5 (14)
Over 40	4.8 (3)	7.1 (8)
Does not apply	21.0 (13)	27.7 (31)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-8

FINANCIAL AID RECEIVED BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID FROM COLLEGE?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	51.8 (74)	56.4 (127)
No	48.3 (69)	43.6 (98)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-9

TIME SPENT COMMUTING BY LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TIME SPENT COMMUTING TO LAGUARDIA?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Less than 15 minutes	5.5 (8)	5.5 (12)
15 - 30 minutes	28.3 (41)	26.3 (57)
30 minutes - one hour	41.4 (60)	39.8 (85)
One hour - one hour and a half	22.1 (32)	17.5 (38)
More than one hour and a half	2.8 (4)	11.5 (25)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-10

FIRST SEMESTER ATTENDING LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FIRST SEMESTER AT LAGUARDIA?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	88.4 (130)	70.5 (160)
No	11.6 (17)	29.5 (67)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-11

TUITION HOURS EARNED BY LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS BEFORE THIS SESSION

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF NO, HOW MANY TUITION HOURS EARNED BEFORE THIS SESSION?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
6 hours or less	17.4 (4)	8.3 (6)
7-11 hours	30.4 (72)	34.7 (25)
12 hours or more	52.2 (12)	56.9 (41)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-12

TUITION HOURS EARNED THIS SESSION BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HOW MANU TUITION HOURS EARNED THIS SESSION?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
6 hours or less	3.7 (5)	11.5 (25)
7-11 hours	3.7 (5)	11.5 (25)
12 or more hours	92.6 (125)	77.1 (168)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-13

ENROLLMENT IN SIX-WEEK SESSION BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ALSO ENROLLED IN THE 6-WEEK SESSION?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	85.4 (123)	93.8 (212)
No	14.6 (21)	6.2 (14)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-14

HOURS PER WEEK SPENT IN SIX-WEEK SESSION BY

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF YES, HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK WILL SPEND IN 6-WEEK SESSION?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
6 hours or less	42.0 (47)	47.0 (94)
7-11 hours	35.7 (40)	30.5 (61)
12 hours or more	22.3 (25)	22.5 (45)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-15

PRIOR ATTENDAMCE AT OTHER COLLEGE BY

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DID YOU ATTEND ANOTHER COLLEGE BEFORE COMING TO LAGUARDIA?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	16.3 (24)	16.8 (38)
No	83.7 (123)	83.2 (188)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-16

REASONS FOR ATTENDING LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO TO COLLEGE?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Improve myself intellectually	21.6 (87)	19.2 (123)
To be able to make more money	10.4 (42)	10.7 (69)
To learn more about the world	7.9 (32)	7.0 (45)
It seemed best thing to do since I couldn't find a job	2.5 (10)	2.7 (17)
To prepare for a particular occupation	20.8 (84)	21.7 (139)
To find out more about myself	5.5 (22)	5.9 (38)
To prepare for senior college	13.6 (55)	11.1 (71)
To get a better job	13.6 (55)	15.8 (101)
My parents wanted me to go	4.0 (16)	4.7 (30)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-17

REASONS FOR ENROLLING BY
LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS
(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WHY DID YOU ENROLL IN LAGUARDIA?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
It offers the kind of program I want	20.1 (70)	25.6 (130)
It was assigned to me by the University	5.5 (19)	4.5 (23)
It is inexpensive	10.1 (35)	10.2 (52)
It has a good reputation	10.3 (36)	10.4 (53)
It is conveniently located	18.1 (63)	15.4 (78)
It is easy	1.4 (5)	1.2 (6)
I am comfortable with the students who come here	5.2 (18)	5.1 (26)
It offers work experience (co-operative education)	12.9 (45)	14.2 (72)
Credits can be transferred to other colleges	16.4 (57)	13.4 (68)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-18

HIGHEST DEGREE INTENDED BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WHAT IS THE HIGHEST DEGREE YOU INTEND TO OBTAIN?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
None	0.7 (1)	1.4 (3)
Vocational Certificate	0.0 (0)	0.9 (2)
Associate (2-year)	13.5 (19)	24.4 (52)
Bachelor's (4-year) (BA, BS, etc.)	41.8 (59)	43.2 (92)
Master's (MA, MS, etc.)	28.4 (40)	17.8 (38)
Doctorate (Ph.D or ED.D)	7.8 (11)	6.6 (14)
Medical Degree(M.D., D.D.S., etc.)	4.3 (6)	4.2 (9)
Law Degree (J.D. or LL.B.)	2.1 (3)	0.0 (0)
Other	1.4 (2)	1.4 (3)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-19

IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETING A COLLEGE DEGREE BY LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO COMPLETE A COLLEGE DEGREE?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very important	93.2 (132)	92.1 (210)
Somewhat important	6.2 (9)	6.6 (15)
Slightly important	0.7 (1)	0.8 (2)
Not at all important	0.0 (0)	0.4 (1)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-20

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED BY FATHER BY

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR FATHER?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Grammar school or less	10.1 (14)	17.4 (38)
Some high school	12.2 (17)	13.2 (29)
High school graduate	23.0 (32)	22.8 (50)
Post secondary other than college	4.3 (6)	5.5 (12)
Some college	9.4 (13)	7.3 (16)
College Degree	13.7 (19)	14.2 (31)
More than College Degree	7.2 (10)	7.8 (17)
Do not know	20.1 (28)	11.9 (26)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-21

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED BY MOTHER BY
LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS
(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR MOTHER?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Grammar school or less	12.2 (17)	19.8 (43)
Some high school	18.7 (26)	20.7 (45)
High school graduate	23.7 (33)	22.6 (49)
Post secondary other than college	5.8 (8)	6.5 (14)
Some college	8.6 (12)	5.1 (11)
College Degree	14.4 (20)	9.2 (20)
More than College Degree	5.0 (7)	7.8 (17)
Do not know	11.5 (16)	8.3 (18)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-22

CLASS FORMAT MOST PREFERRED BY

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WHICH TYPE OF CLASS FORMAT DO YOU MOST PREFER?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Lecture type	11.2 (16)	19.4 (42)
Small-Group type	38.5 (55)	37.3 (81)
Independent study contract	2.8 (4)	5.1 (11)
Laboratory or shop	9.1 (13)	6.5 (14)
Study group	16.1 (23)	14.8 (32)
Correspondence course	2.1 (3)	1.4 (3)
Other	2.1 (3)	1.4 (3)
No preference	18.2 (26)	14.3 (31)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-23

BEST LEARNING AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HOW DO YOU BEST LEARN?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Alone	14.2 (20)	25.7 (57)
With friends	16.3 (23)	12.6 (28)
Being tutored	12.7 (18)	16.2 (36)
In a classroom lecture	7.1 (10)	11.3 (25)
In a classroom discussion	36.9 (52)	30.2 (67)
In a laboratory or shop	5.0 (7)	1.4 (3)
Do not know	7.1 (10)	2.7 (6)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-24

ABILITY TO WRITE SENTENCES IN STANDARD ENGLISH

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO WRITE SENTENCES IN STANDARD ENGLISH?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	2.7 (4)	6.4 (14)
Fair	24.5 (36)	29.7 (65)
Good	40.8 (60)	48.9 (107)
Very Good	32.0 (47)	15.1 (33)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-25

ABILITY TO WRITE A WELL-ORGANIZED PAPER

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO WRITE A WELL-ORGANIZED PAPER?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	5.4 (8)	9.2 (20)
Fair	39.9 (59)	36.4 (79)
Good	48.7 (72)	46.5 (101)
Very Good	6.1 (9)	7.8 (17)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-26

ABILITY TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	7.8 (11)	16.2 (34)
Fair	53.5 (76)	40.5 (85)
Good	36.6 (52)	39.1 (82)
Very Good	2.1 (3)	4.3 (9)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-27

ABILITY TO COMPREHEND WRITTEN MATERIALS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO COMPREHEND WRITTEN MATERIALS?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	2.0 (3)	6.5 (14)
Fair	24.5 (36)	26.5 (57)
Good	53.7 (79)	49.8 (107)
Very Good	19.7 (29)	17.2 (37)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-28

ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY ?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	5.4 (8)	9.7 (21)
Fair	23.8 (35)	28.2 (61)
Good	42.9 (63)	45.4 (98)
Very Good	27.9 (41)	16.7 (36)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-29

ABILITY TO MANAGE TIME FOR COLLEGE WORK

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO MANAGE TIME FOR COLLEGE WORK?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	6.8 (10)	7.2 (15)
Fair	20.4 (30)	24.0 (50)
Good	54.4 (80)	46.6 (97)
Very Good	18.4 (27)	22.1 (46)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-30

ABILITY TO PERFORM GENERAL MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO USE GENERAL MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	8.4 (12)	9.6 (20)
Fair	36.4 (52)	42.1 (88)
Good	40.6 (58)	37.3 (78)
Very Good	14.7 (21)	11.0 (23)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-31

ABILITY TO SPEAK A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO USE A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	31.0 (44)	28.5 (61)
Fair	16.9 (24)	14.0 (30)
Good	22.5 (32)	23.4 (50)
Very Good	29.6 (42)	34.1 (73)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-32

ABILITY TO USE THE LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO USE THE LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	6.8 (10)	6.1 (13)
Fair	30.4 (45)	27.7 (59)
Good	48.7 (72)	48.4 (103)
Very Good	14.2 (21)	17.8 (38)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-33

EFFECTIVENESS OF STUDY SKILLS FOR LEARNING

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

STUDY SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Poor	2.1 (3)	3.7 (8)
Fair	32.9 (48)	32.7 (71)
Good	54.8 (80)	49.8 (108)
Very Good	10.3 (15)	13.8 (30)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-34

EXTRA TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

NEED EXTRA TIME TO COMPLETE YOUR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Good Chance	20.1 (29)	31.3 (66)
Some Chance	36.1 (52)	38.9 (82)
Very Little Chance	32.6 (47)	22.8 (48)
No Chance	11.1 (16)	7.1 (15)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-35

CHANCES OF DROPING OUT OF COLLEGE TEMPORARILY

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DROP OUT OF THIS COLLEGE TEMPORARILY?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Good Chance	0.7 (1)	2.4 (5)
Some Chance	5.5 (8)	7.7 (16)
Very Little Chance	20.7 (30)	22.5 (47)
No Chance	73.1 (106)	67.5 (141)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-36

CHANCES OF TRANSFERING TO ANOTHER COLLEGE BEFORE GRADUATION

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COLLEGE BEFORE GRADUATING?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Good Chance	25.9 (38)	22.4 (48)
Some Chance	22.5 (33)	20.6 (44)
Very Little Chance	27.2 (40)	21.0 (45)
No Chance	24.5 (36)	36.0 (77)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-37

CHANCES OF MAKING AT LEAST A "B" AVERAGE IN COLLEGE

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

MAKE AT LEAST A "B" AVERAGE?	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Very Good Chance	56.6 (72)	52.6 (80)
Some Chance	38.9 (50)	40.8 (62)
Very Little Chance	3.6 (6)	4.6 (7)
No Chance	0.8 (1)	2.0 (3)

where * indicates empty cell

TABLE B-38

IF YOU COULD DO IT OVER AGAIN

WOULD YOU ENROLL IN LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ENROLL AGAIN	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	77.3 (99)	83.7 (128)
No	22.7 (29)	16.3 (25)

TABLE B-39

PLANS TO CONTINUE AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

PLAN TO CONTINUE	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	86.2 (112)	90.9 (141)
No	3.0 (4)	0.5 (1)
Maybe	10.8 (47)	8.5 (13)

TABLE B-40

IF YOU DO NOT INTEND TO CONTINUE AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, DO YOU INTEND TO TRANSFER?

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF NO, TRANSFER	PROGRAM	COMPARISON
Yes	53.9 (14)	12.5 (3)
No	26.9 (7)	41.7 (10)
Maybe	19.2 (5)	45.8 (11)

DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES

COMPARISON CLASS BY LEARNING COMMUNITY TYPE

TABLE B-41

AGE DISTRIBUTION AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

AGE	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
18 or under	19.5 (44)	30.6 (45)	35.4 (23)	31.6 (18)	16.0 (4)
19	12.4 (28)	18.4 (27)	20.0 (13)	14.0 (8)	24.0 (6)
20	13.7 (31)	14.3 (21)	16.9 (11)	10.5 (6)	16.0 (4)
21	10.6 (24)	5.4 (8)	4.6 (3)	5.3 (3)	8.0 (2)
22 to 24	16.4 (37)	11.6 (17)	7.7 (5)	14.0 (8)	16.0 (4)
25 to 29	13.3 (30)	11.6 (17)	9.2 (6)	14.0 (8)	12.0 (3)
30 to 39	11.1 (25)	6.1 (9)	4.6 (3)	10.5 (6)	*
40 or over	3.1 (7)	2.0 (3)	1.5 (1)	*	8.0 (2)

COMP = Comparison classes
LC = Learning Community Classes
LAC = Liberal Art Cluster
EC = Enterprise Center
NSH = New Student House
* = Empty cell

TABLE B-42

FAMILY STATUS OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FAMILY STATUS	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Unmarried (including single and widowed)	64.9 (146)	77.9 (113)	81.5 (52)	84.5 (49)	52.2 (12)
Married	17.3 (39)	9.7 (14)	7.8 (5)	6.9 (4)	21.7 (5)
Living with a partner	8.4 (19)	4.1 (6)	6.3 (4)	1.7 (1)	4.4 (1)
Separated/Divorce	9.3 (21)	8.3 (12)	4.7 (3)	6.9 (4)	21.7 (5)

TABLE B-43

RESPONSIBLITY FOR CARE OF OTHERS AMONG

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CARE OF OTHERS	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	23.7 (53)	14.1 (9)	10.0 (8)	40.0 (10)
No	76.3 (171)	85.9 (55)	16.6 (48)	60.0 (15)

TABLE B-44

OVERALL HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HIGH SCHOOL AVERAGE	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
B+ to A (86-100)	15.5 (34)	9.0 (13)	4.7 (3)	17.7 (10)	*
B to B+ (81-85)	41.5 (91)	27.8 (40)	20.3 (13)	32.1 (18)	37.5 (9)
C+ to B (76-80)	25.1 (55)	36.1 (52)	39.1 (25)	37.5 (21)	25.0 (6)
C to C+ (71-75)	14.2 (31)	16.0 (23)	18.8 (12)	10.7 (6)	20.8 (5)
D to C (65-70)	2.7 (6)	9.7 (14)	17.2 (11)	*	12.5 (3)
Below D (-65)	0.9 (2)	1.4 (2)	*	1.8 (1)	4.2 (1)

TABLE B-45

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED?	COMP	LC	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	35.8 (81)	32.0 (47)	26.2 (17)	37.9 (22)	33.3 (8)
No	64.2 (145)	68.0 (100)	73.9 (48)	62.1 (36)	66.7 (16)

TABLE B-46

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WHERE EMPLOYED	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
At the college	13.4 (11)	5.9 (1)	*	12.5 (1)
Outside the college	86.6 (71)	94.1 (16)	100.0 (24)	87.5 (7)

TABLE B-47

HOURS PER WEEK EMPLOYED OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HOURS PER WEEK	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
1 to 10	9.8 (11)	4.0 (1)	3.6 (1)	11.1 (1)
11 to 20	16.1 (18)	32.0 (8)	17.9 (5)	33.3 (3)
21 to 30	26.8 (30)	20.0 (5)	28.6 (8)	33.3 (3)
31 to 40	12.5 (14)	16.0 (4)	25.0 (7)	*
Over 40	7.1 (8)	*	10.7 (3)	*
Does not apply	27.7 (31)	28.0 (7)	14.3 (4)	22.2 (2)

TABLE B-48

RECEPTION OF FINANCIAL AID FROM COLLEGE AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FINANCIAL AID	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	56.4 (127)	62.0 (39)	41.4 (24)	47.8 (11)
No	43.6 (98)	37.1 (23)	58.6 (34)	52.2 (12)

TABLE B-49

TIME SPENT COMMUTING TO LAGUARDIA OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TIME COMMUTING TO LAGUARDIA	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Less than 15 minutes	5.5 (12)	6.3 (4)	5.4 (3)	4.0 (1)
15 - 30 minutes	26.3 (57)	26.6 (17)	28.6 (16)	32.0 (8)
30 minutes - one hour	39.2 (85)	43.8 (28)	44.6 (25)	28.0 (7)
One hour- one hour and a half	17.5 (38)	20.3 (13)	19.6 (11)	32.0 (8)
More than one hour and a half	11.5 (25)	3.1 (2)	1.8 (1)	4.0 (1)

TABLE B-50

FIRST SEMESTER ATTENDING LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FIRST SEMESTER AT LAGUARDIA	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	70.5 (160)	87.5 (56)	84.5 (49)	100.0 (25)
No	29.5 (67)	12.5 (8)	15.5 (9)	*

TABLE B-51

IF NO, HOW MANY TUITION HOURS EARNED BEFORE THIS SESSION

AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TUITION HOURS BEFORE THIS SESSION	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
6 hours or less	8.3 (6)	10.0 (1)	27.3 (3)	*
7-11 hours	34.7 (25)	50.0 (5)	18.2 (2)	*
12 hours or more	56.9 (41)	40.0 (4)	54.6 (6)	100.0 (2)

TABLE B-52

HOW MANY TUITION HOURS EARNED THIS SESSION AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TUITION HOURS THIS SESSION	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
6 hours or less	11.5 (25)	3.2 (2)	*	15.0 (3)
7-11 hours	11.5 (25)	6.5 (4)	*	5.0 (1)
12 or more hours	77.1 (168)	90.3 (56)	100.0 (53)	80.0 (16)

TABLE B-53

ENROLLMENT IN THE SIX-WEEK SESSION AMONG

LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

SIX-WEEK SESSION	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	93.4 (212)	84.1 (53)	89.6 (52)	78.3 (18)
No	6.2 (14)	15.9 (10)	10.3 (6)	21.7 (5)

TABLE B-54

HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK TO BE SPENT IN THE SIX-WEEK SESSION AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

SIX-WEEK SESSION	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
6 hours or less	47.0 (94)	54.0 (27)	31.3 (15)	35.7 (5)
7-11 hours	30.5 (61)	32.0 (16)	43.8 (21)	21.4 (3)
12 hours or more	22.5 (45)	14.0 (7)	25.0 (12)	42.9 (6)

TABLE B-55

ATTENDANCE AT ANOTHER COLLEGE BEFORE ATTENDING LAGUARDIA AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ATTEND ANOTHER COLLEGE	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	16.8 (38)	12.3 (8)	20.7 (12)	16.7 (4)
No	83.2 (188)	87.7 (57)	79.3 (46)	83.3 (20)

TABLE B-56

REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE AMONG
LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS
(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

GO TO COLLEGE?	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Improve myself intellectually	18.4 (87)	21.9 (36)	19.9 (31)	28.3 (13)
To be able to make more money	10.8 (51)	9.8 (16)	13.5 (21)	4.3 (2)
To learn more about the world	7.2 (34)	9.1 (15)	8.3 (13)	6.6 (3)
It seemed best thing to do since I couldn't find a job	1.7 (17)	2.4 (4)	1.9 (3)	2.2 (1)
To prepare for a particular occupation	22.7 (107)	18.3 (30)	21.2 (33)	28.3 (13)
To find out more about myself	7.0 (33)	6.1 (10)	5.1 (8)	6.6 (3)
To prepare for senior college	11.0 (52)	16.5 (27)	13.5 (21)	8.7 (4)
To get a better job	16.1 (76)	11.0 (18)	12.8 (20)	15.2 (7)
My parents wanted me to go	5.1 (24)	4.9 (8)	3.8 (6)	*

NOTE: Percentages total more than 100% as individuals may mark more than one reason.

TABLE B-57

REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN LAGUARDIA AMONG
LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS
(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ENROLL IN LAGUARDIA	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
It offers the kind of program I want	24.5 (90)	13.2 (17)	23.6 (34)	35.6 (16)
It was assigned to me by the University	5.2 (19)	9.3 (12)	2.8 (4)	2.2 (1)
It is inexpensive	9.8 (36)	11.6 (15)	10.4 (15)	6.7 (3)
It has a good reputation	10.9 (40)	9.3 (12)	11.8 (17)	4.9 (4)
It is conveniently located	16.8 (59)	18.6 (24)	15.3 (22)	22.2 (10)
It is easy	1.6 (6)	1.6 (2)	1.4 (2)	2.2 (1)
I am comfortable with the students who come here	6.0 (22)	6.2 (8)	4.9 (7)	4.4 (2)
It offers work experience (cooperative education)	12.8 (47)	9.3 (12)	16.6 (24)	11.1 (5)
Credits can be transferred to other colleges	13.1 (48)	20.9 (33)	13.2 (19)	6.7 (3)

NOTE: Percentages total more than 100% as individuals may mark more than one reason.

TABLE B-58

HIGHEST DEGREE INTENDED AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

HIGHEST DEGREE INTENDED	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
None	1.4 (3)	*	1.8 (1)	*
Vocational Certificate	0.9 (2)	*	*	*
Associate (2-year)	24.4 (52)	6.5 (4)	18.2 (10)	20.8 (5)
Bachelor's (4-year) (BA, BS, etc.)	43.2 (92)	40.3 (25)	41.8 (23)	45.8 (11)
Master's (MA, MS, etc.)	17.8 (38)	30.7 (19)	29.1 (16)	20.8 (5)
Doctorate (Ph.D or ED.D)	6.6 (14)	8.1 (5)	7.3 (4)	8.3 (2)
Medical Degree (M.D., D.D.S., etc.)	4.2 (9)	6.5 (4)	1.8 (1)	4.2 (1)
Law Degree (J.D. or LL.B.)	*	4.8 (3)	*	*
Other	1.4 (3)	3.2 (2)	*	*

TABLE B-59

IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETING A COLLEGE DEGREE AMONG LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

COMPLETE COLLEGE DEGREE	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very important	92.1 (210)	90.5 (57)	94.8 (55)	96.0 (24)
Somewhat important	6.6 (15)	9.5 (6)	3.5 (2)	4.0 (1)
Slightly important	0.9 (2)	*	1.7 (1)	*
Not at all important	0.4 (1)	*	*	*

TABLE B-60

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED FATHER OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR FATHER	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Grammar school or less	17.4 (38)	6.7 (4)	16.7 (9)	4.0 (1)
Some high school	13.2 (29)	11.7 (7)	11.1 (6)	16.0 (4)
High school graduate	22.8 (50)	26.7 (16)	22.2 (22)	16.0 (4)
Post secondary other than college	5.5 (12)	5.0 (3)	5.6 (3)	*
Some college	7.3 (16)	11.7 (7)	7.4 (4)	8.0 (2)
College Degree	14.2 (31)	10.0 (6)	16.7 (9)	16.0 (4)
More than college degree	7.8 (17)	6.7 (4)	9.3 (5)	4.0 (1)
Do not know	11.9 (26)	21.7 (13)	11.1 (6)	36.0 (9)

TABLE B-61

HIGHEST DEGREE COMPLETED MOTHER OF LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DEGREE COMPLETED BY YOUR MOTHER	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Grammar school or less	19.8 (43)	6.4 (4)	15.4 (8)	20.8 (5)
Some high school	20.7 (45)	19.1 (12)	17.3 (9)	20.8 (5)
High school graduate	22.6 (49)	23.8 (15)	28.9 (15)	12.5 (3)
Post secondary other than college	6.5 (14)	6.4 (4)	7.7 (4)	*
Some college	5.1 (11)	6.4 (4)	9.6 (5)	12.5 (3)
College Degree	9.2 (20)	19.1 (12)	9.6 (5)	12.5 (3)
More than College Degree	7.8 (17)	4.8 (3)	7.7 (4)	*
Do not know	8.3 (18)	14.3 (9)	3.9 (2)	20.8 (5)

TABLE B-62

TYPE OF CLASS FORMAT MOST PREFERRED AMONG
LEARNING COMMUNITY AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

CLASS FORMAT MOST PREFERRED	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Lecture type	19.4 (42)	9.5 (6)	14.0 (8)	8.7 (2)
Small-Group type	37.3 (81)	36.5 (23)	42.1 (24)	34.8 (8)
Independent study contract	5.1 (11)	3.2 (2)	1.8 (1)	4.4 (1)
Laboratory or shop	6.5 (14)	6.4 (4)	14.0 (8)	4.4 (1)
Study group	14.8 (32)	14.3 (9)	8.8 (5)	39.1 (9)
Correspondence course	1.4 (3)	1.6 (1)	3.5 (2)	*
Other	1.4 (3)	1.6 (1)	3.5 (2)	*
No preference	14.3 (31)	27.0 (17)	12.3 (7)	8.7 (2)

TABLE B-63

MODE OF BEST LEARNING OF LEARNING COMMUNITY

AND COMPARISON CLASS STUDENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

BEST LEARN	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Alone	25.7 (57)	16.1 (10)	14.3 (8)	8.7 (2)
With friends	12.6 (28)	17.7 (11)	14.3 (8)	17.4 (4)
Being tutored	16.2 (36)	3.2 (2)	19.6 (11)	21.7 (5)
In a classroom lecture	11.3 (25)	3.2 (2)	8.9 (5)	13.0 (3)
In a classroom discussion	30.2 (67)	45.2 (28)	28.6 (16)	34.8 (8)
In a laboratory or shop	1.4 (3)	1.6 (1)	10.7 (6)	*
Do not know	2.7 (6)	12.9 (8)	1.8 (1)	4.4 (1)

TABLE B-64

ABILITY TO WRITE SENTENCES IN STANDARD ENGLISH

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

SENTENCES IN STANDARD ENGLISH	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	6.4 (14)	3.1 (2)	1.7 (1)	4.0 (1)
Fair	29.7 (65)	14.1 (9)	32.8 (19)	32.0 (8)
Good	48.7 (107)	37.5 (24)	37.9 (22)	56.0 (14)
Very Good	15.1 (33)	45.3 (29)	27.6 (16)	8.0 (2)

TABLE B-65

ABILITY TO WRITE A WELL-ORGANIZED PAPER

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

WRITE WELL - ORGANIZED PAPER	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	9.2 (20)	*	10.3 (27)	8.0 (2)
Fair	36.4 (79)	27.7 (18)	46.6 (27)	56.0 (14)
Good	46.5 (101)	66.2 (43)	34.5 (20)	36.0 (9)
Very Good	7.8 (17)	6.2 (4)	8.6 (5)	*

TABLE B-66

ABILITY TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY, EFFECTIVELY	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	16.2 (34)	7.8 (5)	7.0 (4)	9.5 (2)
Fair	40.5 (85)	46.9 (30)	54.4 (31)	71.4 (15)
Good	39.1 (82)	42.2 (27)	36.8 (21)	19.1 (4)
Very Good	4.3 (9)	3.1 (2)	1.8 (1)	*

TABLE B-67

ABILITY TO COMPREHEND WRITTEN MATERIALS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

COMPREHEND WRITTTEN MATERIALS	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	6.5 (14)	*	*	12.5 (3)
Fair	26.5 (57)	15.4 (10)	27.6 (16)	41.7 (10)
Good	49.8 (107)	61.5 (40)	50.0 (29)	41.7 (10)
Very Good	17.2 (37)	23.1 (15)	22.4 (13)	4.2 (1)

TABLE B-68

ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY, EFFECTIVELY

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

ABILITY TO SPEAK CLEARLY, EFFECTIVELY	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	5.8 (21)	6.2 (4)	3.5 (2)	8.3 (2)
Fair	16.8 (61)	13.9 (9)	29.3 (17)	37.5 (9)
Good	27.0 (98)	41.5 (27)	44.8 (26)	41.7 (10)
Very Good	9.9 (36)	38.5 (25)	22.4 (13)	12.5 (3)

TABLE B-69

ABILITY TO MANAGE TIME FOR COLLEGE WORK

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

MANAGE TIME FOR COLLEGE WORK	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	7.2 (15)	9.2 (6)	5.3 (3)	4.0 (1)
Fair	24.0 (50)	21.5 (14)	22.8 (13)	12.0 (3)
Good	46.6 (97)	49.2 (32)	57.9 (33)	60.0 (15)
Very Good	22.1 (46)	20.0 (13)	14.0 (8)	24.0 (6)

TABLE B-70

ABILITY TO USE GENERAL MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

GENERAL MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	9.6 (20)	14.3 (9)	3.6 (2)	4.0 (1)
Fair	42.1 (88)	31.8 (20)	41.8 (23)	36.0 (9)
Good	37.3 (78)	44.4 (28)	32.7 (18)	48.0 (12)
Very Good	11.0 (23)	9.5 (6)	21.8 (12)	12.0 (3)

TABLE B-71

ABILITY TO USE A FOREIGN LANAUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Poor	28.5 (61)	34.9 (22)	33.3 (19)	13.6 (3)
Fair	14.0 (30)	19.1 (12)	12.3 (7)	22.7 (5)
Good	23.4 (50)	19.1 (12)	21.1 (12)	36.4 (8)
Very Good	34.1 (73)	27.0 (17)	33.3 (19)	27.3 (6)

TABLE B-72

ABILITY TO USE THE LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

LIBRARY FOR RESEARCH	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	6.1 (13)	6.2 (4)	3.5 (2)	16.0 (4)
Some Chance	27.7 (59)	30.1 (20)	36.2 (21)	16.0 (4)
Very Little Chance	48.4 (103)	49.2 (23)	50.0 (29)	44.0 (11)
No Chance	17.8 (38)	13.9 (9)	10.3 (6)	24.0 (6)

TABLE B-73

STUDY SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

STUDY SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	3.7 (8)	3.1 (2)	*	4.1 (1)
Some Chance	32.7 (72)	29.2 (19)	40.4 (23)	25.0 (6)
Very Little Chance	49.8 (108)	56.9 (37)	49.1 (28)	62.5 (15)
No Chance	13.8 (30)	10.8 (7)	10.5 (6)	8.3 (2)

TABLE B-74

NEED EXTRA TIME TO COMPLETE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

COMPLETE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	31.3 (66)	21.9 (14)	10.5 (6)	39.1 (9)
Some Chance	38.9 (82)	32.8 (21)	38.6 (22)	39.1 (9)
Very Little Chance	22.8 (48)	29.7 (19)	45.6 (26)	8.7 (2)
No Chance	7.1 (15)	15.6 (10)	5.2 (3)	13.0 (3)

TABLE B-75

LIKELIHOOD OF DROPPING OUT OF COLLEGE TEMPORARILY?

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

DROP OUT OF THIS COLLEGE TEMPORARILY	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	2.4 (5)	1.5 (1)	*	*
Some Chance	7.7 (16)	6.1 (4)	3.5 (2)	8.7 (2)
Very Little Chance	22.5 (47)	21.5 (14)	24.6 (14)	8.7 (2)
No Chance	67.5 (141)	70.8 (46)	71.9 (41)	82.6 (19)

TABLE B-76

LIKELIHOOD OF TRANSFERING TO ANOTHER COLLEGE BEFORE GRADUATING

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COLLEGE	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	2.4 (5)	1.5 (1)	*	*
Some Chance	7.7 (16)	6.1 (4)	3.5 (2)	8.7 (2)
Very Little Chance	22.5 (47)	21.5 (14)	24.6 (14)	8.7 (2)
No Chance	67.5 (141)	70.8 (46)	71.9 (41)	82.6 (19)

TABLE B-77

LIKELIHOOD OF MAKING AT LEAST A "B" AVERAGE

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

MAKE AT LEAST A "B" AVERAGE	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Very Good Chance	2.4 (5)	1.5 (1)	*	*
Some Chance	7.7 (16)	6.1 (4)	3.5 (2)	8.7 (2)
Very Little Chance	22.5 (47)	21.5 (14)	24.6 (14)	8.7 (2)
No Chance	67.5 (141)	70.8 (46)	71.9 (41)	82.6 (19)

TABLE B-78

IF YOU COULD DO IT OVER AGAIN

WOULD YOU ENROLL IN LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

RE-ENROLL	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	83.7 (128)	78.6 (44)	72.3 (34)	84.0 (21)
No	16.3 (25)	21.4 (12)	27.7 (13)	16.0 (4)

TABLE B-79

PLANS TO CONTINUE AT LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

PLAN TO CONTINUE	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	90.9 (141)	82.1 (46)	91.8 (45)	84.0 (21)
No	0.7 (1)	3.6 (2)	2.0 (1)	4.0 (1)
Maybe	8.4 (13)	14.3 (8)	6.1 (3)	12.0 (3)

TABLE B-80

IF YOU DO NOT INTEND TO CONTINUE AT

LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, DO YOU INTEND TO TRANSFER?

(percentages with numbers in parentheses)

IF NO, INTEND TO TRANSFER	COMP	LAC	EC	NSH
Yes	12.5 (3)	70.0 (7)	44.4 (4)	42.9 (3)
No	41.7 (10)	10.1 (1)	44.4 (4)	28.6 (2)
Maybe	45.8 (11)	20.0 (2)	11.1 (1)	28.6 (2)